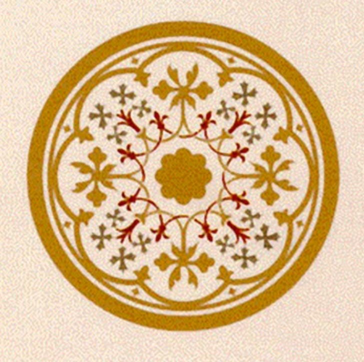
DAAR US-SUNNAH CLASSIC COLLECTION

The Excellence of Knowledge



IBN RAJAB AL-ḤANBALĪ



al-Ḥāfiẓ ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī

The EXCELLENCE of KNOWLEDGE

The Virtue of the *Salaf* over the *Khalaf*

being a translation of his *Faḍl 'Ilm al-Salaf 'alā'l-Khalaf*



THE EXCELLENCE OF KNOWLEDGE

The Virtue of the *Salaf* over the *Khalaf*

ĪBN RAJAN AL-ḤANBALĪ

Translated from the original Arabic by
Abū Rumaysah



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BIRMINGHAM

CONTENT

Transliteration Table

Consonants. Arabic

initial: unexpressed medial and final:

ء	ʾ	د	d	ض	ḍ	ك	k
ب	b	ذ	dh	ط	ṭ	ل	l
ت	t	ر	r	ظ	ẓ	م	m
ث	th	ز	z	ع	ʿ	ن	n
ج	j	س	s	غ	gh	هـ	h
ح	ḥ	ش	sh	ف	f	و	w
خ	kh	ص	ṣ	ق	q	ي	y

Vowels, diphthongs, etc.

Short:	ـَ	a	ـِ	i	ـُ	u
long:	ـَا	ā	ـُو	ū	ـِي	ī
diphthongs:			ـَوْ	aw		
			ـَيْ	ay		

THE AUTHOR

Ḥāfiẓ Abū'l-Faraj ibn Rajab al-Ḥanbalī

He is the Imām and Ḥāfiẓ, Zaynu'l-Dīn 'Abdur-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn 'Abdir-Raḥmān ibn al-Ḥasan ibn Muḥammad ibn Abū-l-Barakāt Mas'ūd al-Sulamī al-Ḥanbalī al-Dimashqī. His agnomen was Abū'l-Faraj, and his nickname was Ibn Rajab, which was the nickname of his grandfather who was born in that month.

He was born in Baghdād in 736H and was raised by a knowledgeable and pious family. He died on a Monday night, the fourth of Ramaḍān, 795H in al-Ḥumariyyah, Damascus.

He learned and took knowledge from the greatest scholars of his time. In Damascus, he studied under Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziyyah, Zaynu'l-Dīn al-'Irāqī, ibn al-Naqīb, Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Khabbāz, Dāwūd ibn Ibrāhīm al-'Aṭṭār, ibn Qāṭī al-Jabal and Aḥmad ibn 'Abdu-l-Hādī al-Ḥanbalī. In Makkah, he heard from al-Fakhr 'Uthmān ibn Yūsuf al-Nuwayrī. In Jerusalem, he heard from al-Ḥāfiẓ al-'Alā'ī. In Egypt, he heard from Ṣadru'l-Dīn Abū'l-Fatḥ al-Maydūmī and Nāṣiru'l-Dīn ibn al-Mulūk.

Many students of knowledge came to him to study under him. Amongst the most famous of his students were: Abū'l-'Abbās Aḥmad ibn Abū Bakr ibn 'Alī al-Ḥanbalī; Abū'l-Faḍl Aḥmad ibn Naṣr ibn Aḥmad; Dāwūd ibn Sulaymān al-Mawsilī; 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn Aḥmad ibn Muḥammad al-Muqrī'; Zaynū'l-Dīn 'Abdu'l-Raḥmān ibn Sulaymān ibn Abū'l-Karam; Abū Dharr al-Zarkashī; al-Qāḍī 'Alā'ū'l-Dīn ibn al-Lahām al-Ba'lī; and Aḥmad ibn Ṣayfū'l-Dīn al-Ḥamawī.

Ibn Rajab devoted himself to knowledge and spent the vast majority of his time researching, writing, authoring, teaching, and giving legal rulings.

Many scholars praised him for his vast knowledge, asceticism and expertise in the Ḥanbalī school of thought. Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbah said of him, 'He read and became proficient in the various fields of science. He engrossed himself with the issues of the madhhab until he mastered it. He devoted himself to the occupation of knowledge of the texts, defects and meanings of the ḥadīth.'[1]

Ibn Ḥajr said of him, 'He was highly proficient in the science of ḥadīth in terms of the names of reporters, their biographies, their paths of narration and awareness of their meanings.'[2]

Ibn Mufliḥ said of him, 'He is the Shaykh, the great scholar, the Ḥāfiẓ, the ascetic, the Shaykh of the Ḥanbalī madhhab and he authored many beneficial works.'[3]

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[1] Ibn Qāḍī al-Shuhbah, *Tārīkh*, vol. 3, p. 195.

[2] ibn Ḥajr, *Inbā'u'l-Ghamr*, vol. 1, p. 460.

[3] *al-Maqṣad al-Arshad*, vol. 2, p. 81.

He wrote many beneficial works, some of them outstanding such as *al-Qawā'id al-Kubrā fi'l-Furū'* about which it was said, 'It is one of the wonders of this age.'[4] His commentary to at-Tirmidhī is said to be the most extensive and best ever written so much so that al-'Irāqī; about whom ibn Ḥajr said, 'He was the wonder of his age'; would ask for his help when compiling his own commentary to the same book.

- Moreover he has many valuable monographs explaining various aḥādīth such as: *Sharḥ Ḥadīth Mā Dhi'bāni Jāi'ān Ursilā fī Ghanam*; *Ikhtiyār al-Awlā Sharḥ Ḥadīth Ikhtiṣām al-Mala' al-A'lā*; *Nūr al-Iqtibās fī Sharḥ Waṣiyyah al-Nabī li ibn 'Abbās*; and *Kashfu'l-Kurbah fī Wasfi Ḥāli Ahli-l-Ghurbah.*

- In exegesis his works include: *Tafsīr Sūrah al-Ikhlāṣ*; *Tafsīr Sūrah al-Fātiḥah*; *Tafsīr Sūrah al-Naṣr*, and *al-Istighnā' bi'l-Qur'ān.*

- In ḥadīth his works include: *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī*; *Fatḥu'l-Bārī Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*; and *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wa'l-Ḥikam.*

- In fiqh his works include: *al-Istikhrāj fī Aḥkām al-Kharāj*; and *al-Qawā'id al-Fiqhiyyah.*

- In biographies his works include the monumental *Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāti'l-Ḥanābilah.*

- In exhortation his works include: *Laṭā'if al-Ma'ārif* and *al-Takhwīf min al-Nār.*

[4] ibn 'Abdu'l-Hādī, *Dhayl 'alā Ṭabaqāt ibn Rajab*, p. 38.

CHAPTER ONE

All praise and thanks are due to Allāh. May Allāh extol and shower abundant blessings of peace upon Muḥammad, his Family, and Companions.

To proceed:

These are some brief words about the meaning of knowledge (*'ilm*) and its classification into that which is beneficial and that which is not;[5] as well as a note regarding the excellence of the knowledge of the Salaf over that of the Khalaf. So we say, seeking Allāh's aid, and there is no strength or ability except with Him:

In His Book, Allāh sometimes mentions knowledge in a praiseworthy way; referring to beneficial knowledge, and at other times in a blameworthy way; referring to knowledge that is not beneficial.

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[5] Refer to ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr, *Jāmi' Bayān al-'Ilm*, vol. 1, pp. 622+; and ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Fawā'id*, pp. 127, 154.

1.1 Beneficial Knowledge

As for the first category, its example lies in the sayings of Allāh, Exalted is He,

قُلْ هَلْ يَسْتَوِي ٱلَّذِينَ يَعْلَمُونَ وَٱلَّذِينَ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ

Say: are they equal, those who possess knowledge and those who do not?[6]

شَهِدَ ٱللَّهُ أَنَّهُۥ لَآ إِلَٰهَ إِلَّا هُوَ وَٱلْمَلَٰٓئِكَةُ وَأُو۟لُوا۟ ٱلْعِلْمِ قَآئِمًۢا بِٱلْقِسْطِ

Allāh bears witness that none has the right to be worshipped save Him, and so do the angels and those firmly endowed with knowledge, upholding justice.[7]

قُل رَّبِّ زِدْنِى عِلْمًا ﴿١١٤﴾

And say: My Lord! Increase me in knowledge.[8]

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُا۟

It is only the learned amongst His servants who truly fear Allāh.[9]

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6 *al-Zumar* (39): 9

7 *Āli ʿImrān* (3): 13

8 *Ṭā Hā* (20): 114

9 *Fāṭir* (35): 28

It also lies in what Allāh, Glorious is He, recounts of the story of Ādam. He taught him the names of all things and then presented them to the angels, who said,

سُبْحَٰنَكَ لَا عِلْمَ لَنَآ إِلَّا مَا عَلَّمْتَنَآ إِنَّكَ أَنتَ ٱلْعَلِيمُ ٱلْحَكِيمُ

Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except that which You have given us. You alone are the Knowing, the Wise.[10]

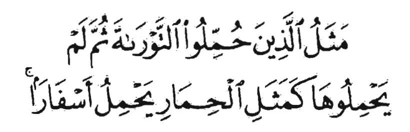
Further mention of it can be seen in what Allāh, Glorious and Exalted is He, recounts of the story of Mūsā (*'alayhis as-salām*) who asked Khiḍr,

هَلْ أَتَّبِعُكَ عَلَىٰٓ أَن تُعَلِّمَنِ مِمَّا عُلِّمْتَ رُشْدًا ﴿٦٦﴾

May I follow you so you may teach me the right-guidance which you have been taught?[11]

this being none other than beneficial knowledge.

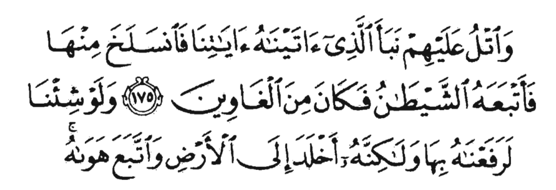
Moreover we have been informed about a people who were recipients of knowledge but their knowledge was of no avail. This knowledge, in and of itself, is beneficial, but the one to whom it was granted was not benefited by it. Allāh, Exalted is He, says,



[10] *al-Baqarah* (2): 32

[11] *al-Kahf* (18): 66

The likeness of those who were entrusted the Torah and who did not carry out its requirements is like that of a donkey ladened with books.[12]



And recite to them the tale of him who We gave Our Signs but he sloughed them off, so Satan overtook him and he became of those who were deceived. If We had wanted to, We would have raised him up by them, but he gravitated towards the earth and pursued his whims and base desires.[13]

فَخَلَفَ مِنۢ بَعْدِهِمْ خَلْفٌ
وَرِثُوا۟ ٱلْكِتَٰبَ يَأْخُذُونَ عَرَضَ هَٰذَا ٱلْأَدْنَىٰ وَيَقُولُونَ سَيُغْفَرُ لَنَا
وَإِن يَأْتِهِمْ عَرَضٌ مِّثْلُهُۥ يَأْخُذُوهُ

And after them came a people who inherited the Book. They took the goods of this lowly life, saying, 'We will be forgiven for it.' Yet if a similar chance came to them again, they would seize it.[14]

Allāh also says,

[12] *al-Jumu'ah* (62): 5

[13] *al-A'rāf* (7): 175-176

[14] *al-A'rāf* (7): 169

وَأَضَلَّهُ ٱللَّهُ عَلَىٰ عِلْمٍ

So Allāh allowed him to stray despite knowledge.[15]

One of the explanations of this verse is that Allāh sent him astray in spite of his knowledge.

1.2 Non-Beneficial Knowledge

As for the second category of knowledge, the category that Allāh mentioned by way of censure, examples of it can be found in His mention of magic (*siḥr*),

وَيَتَعَلَّمُونَ
مَا يَضُرُّهُمْ وَلَا يَنفَعُهُمْ وَلَقَدْ عَلِمُوا لَمَنِ ٱشْتَرَىٰهُ
مَا لَهُۥ فِى ٱلْـَٔاخِرَةِ مِنْ خَلَٰقٍ

And they learn that which harms them and profits them not. And surely they know that he who purchases it would have no portion in the Hereafter.[16]

He also says,

فَلَمَّا جَآءَتْهُمْ رُسُلُهُم بِٱلْبَيِّنَٰتِ فَرِحُوا بِمَا عِندَهُم
مِّنَ ٱلْعِلْمِ وَحَاقَ بِهِم مَّا كَانُوا بِهِۦ يَسْتَهْزِءُونَ ﴿٨٣﴾

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[15] *al-Jāthiyah* (45): 23

[16] *al-Baqarah* (2): 102

And when their messengers brought them clear proofs, they exulted in the knowledge that they already had, but they were soon overtaken by that which they had mocked.[17]

يَعْلَمُونَ ظَٰهِرًا مِّنَ ٱلْحَيَوٰةِ ٱلدُّنْيَا وَهُمْ عَنِ ٱلْءَاخِرَةِ هُمْ غَٰفِلُونَ

They know the outer things of the life of this world, but are heedless of the Hereafter.[18]

1.3 The Division of Knowledge in the Sunnah

It is for this reason that the Sunnah also divides knowledge into that which is beneficial and that which is not, directing us to take refuge from knowledge that is not beneficial and to ask for knowledge that is.

Muslim records on the authority of Zayd ibn Arqam that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, used to say,

«اللّٰهم إني أعوذُ بِكَ من عِلْمٍ لا يَنْفَعُ، ومن قلبٍ لا يَخْشَعُ، ومن نفسٍ لا تَشْبَعُ، ومن دعوةٍ لا يُسْتَجَابُ لها»

Allāh! I take refuge with You from knowledge that does not benefit; from a heart that has no fear; from a soul that is never content; and from an invocation (*daʿwah*) that is not responded to.[19]

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[17] *Ghāfir* (40): 83

[18] *al-Rūm* (30): 7

[19] Muslim #2722.

The compilers of the Sunan[20] also recorded this via a number of different routes, from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. In some of them there occur the words,

«ومن دعاءٍ لا يُسْمَع»

from a supplication (*du'ā*) that is not heard.

and in others there is the additional wording,

«أَعوذُ بِكَ من هؤلاءِ الأربع»

I take refuge with You from these four.

Nasā'ī records on the authority of Jābir that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, used to supplicate,

«اللّهم إني أَسْأَلُكَ عِلماً نَافِعاً، وأَعوذ بِكَ من علمٍ لا يَنفع»

Allāh! I beseech You for knowledge that benefits and I take refuge with You from knowledge that does not benefit.[21]

This was also recorded by ibn Mājah, his wording being that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Ask Allāh for beneficial knowledge and take refuge with Allah from knowl-

[20] Tirmidhī #3482, Nasā'ī #5472-5538-5539, ibn Mājah #250, and Abū Dāwūd #1533 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

[21] It is not to be found in Nasā'ī, *Ṣughrā* or *Kubrā*. This wording is recorded by ibn Ḥibbān #82 and Haythamī, *Majma' al-Zawā'id*, vol. 10, p. 181, said that its isnād was ḥasan.

edge that does not benefit."[22]

Tirmidhī has also recorded it on the authority of Abū Hurayrah with the wording,

«اللَّهم انفعني بما علمتني، وعَلمني ما ينفعني، وزِدني علماً»

Allāh! Benefit me by what You have taught me, teach me what will be of benefit to me, and increase me in knowledge.[23]

Nasā'ī records the ḥadīth on the authority of Anas that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, used to supplicate with the words,

«اللَّهم انفعني بما عَلمتني، وعلمني ما ينفعني، وارزقني علماً تنفعني به»

Allāh! Benefit me with what You have taught me, teach me what will be of benefit to me, and nourish me with knowledge by which You may benefit me.[24]

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[22] Ibn Mājah #3843.

'Irāqī, *Takhrīj al-Iḥyā'*, vol. 1, p. 31, declared it ḥasan as did Haythamī, vol. 10, p. 182. Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-Ṣaghīr* #4702 declared it ṣaḥīḥ but Munāwī stated that the correct position was that the ḥadīth was ḥasan, quoting al-'Alā'ī; this was confirmed by Albānī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #1511; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #3635.

[23] Tirmidhī #3593 and ibn Mājah #251-3833.

The ḥadīth was declared ḥasan by Suyūṭī #1506 and ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī* #2845; *Ṣaḥiḥ ibn Mājah* #203-3091.

[24] It is not to be found in Nasā'ī, *al-Ṣughrā* but is recorded by Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmi' al-Kabīr*, vol. 1, p. 387, who references it to Ṭayālisī.

It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākim #1879 with Dhahabī agreeing.

Abū Nuʿaym records the ḥadīth of Anas that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, used to say,

«اللّهم إنّا نَسألك إيماناً دائماً، فَرُب إيمان غير دائم، وأسألك علماً نافعاً فَرُب علم غير نافع»

> Allāh! I ask You for faith that endures since faith could well disappear, and I ask You for knowledge that benefits for some knowledge could well be of no benefit.[25]

Abū Dāwūd records the ḥadīth of Buraydah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Of a surety, some forms of speech (*bayān*) are magic[26] and some knowledge is ignorance."[27]

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[25] Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-Kabīr*, vol. 1, p. 387, quotes a ḥadīth of the same meaning and references it to Abū Nuʿaym, *al-Ḥilyah*.

[26] Refer to ibn Ḥajr, *Fatḥ al-Bārī*, vol. 10, p. 238, and ibn Ḥibbān, *Rawḍatu'l-ʿUqalā'*, p. 179.

Khaṭṭābī, *Aʿlām al-Ḥadīth*, vol. 3, p. 1967, said, 'Bayān is of two types: the first whereby the intended meaning is expressed clearly, whatever language it may be in, this category is not regarded as magic; the second whereby the intended meaning is expressed in eloquent, cleverly doctored phrases based upon specific rules such that one listening takes pleasure in hearing the words and they affect his very heart. This category is what has been likened to magic as it captivates and beguiles the heart and overcomes the soul to the point that the face of reality could be transformed to illusion and the one captivated perceive only that which the speaker wants him to perceive. This category can be used in a commendable fashion and in a blameworthy fashion. As for the commendable form, it is to direct the person towards the truth and use these methods to aid the truth.... As for the blameworthy form, it is to direct the person towards falsehood or envelop him in confusion such that the truth is seen as falsehood and falsehood as truth. This is completely blameworthy and has been likened to that which is completely blameworthy - magic.'

[27] Abū Dāwūd #5012. =

Ṣaʿṣaʿah ibn Ṣawḥān explained the statement, "and some knowledge is ignorance" to mean, 'A scholar burdens himself with taking on knowledge that does not concern him by which he becomes ignorant.'[28] It has also been explained to mean, 'That knowledge which brings about harm and does not benefit is actually ignorance,'[29] this is because being ignorant of it is better than knowing it. So understand that if the one ignorant of it is in a better condition than the one who learned it, then this knowledge is actually worse than ignorance. Such is the case with magic and other types of knowledge that harm ones religious or worldly well-being.

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Its isnād is ḍaʿīf as stated by ʿIrāqī, *Takhrīj al-Iḥyā'*, vol. 1, p. 31 and quoted from him by Munāwī, vol. 2, p. 666. It was declared so by Suyūṭī #2458 and confirmed by Albānī, *Ḍaʿīf al-Jāmiʿ* #1991.

However the first half is authentically reported on the authority of a group of the Companions, for an analysis of their reports refer to Arnaʿūṭ, *Taḥqīq Musnad Aḥmad* #2424-4342-4651

[28] Abū Dāwūd #5012 and Abū 'Ubaid, *al-ʿAẓībīn*, vol. 1, p. 430.

Another possible translation of Ṣaʿṣaʿah's statement would be, 'A scholar affects knowledge that he does not have and so it shows him to be ignorant.'

[29] Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Nihāyah*, vol. 1, p. 322, said, 'It is also said that it means that one learn that which he has no need of learning, such as astronomy, at the same time ignoring what he is in need of for his religious life such as knowledge of the Book and Sunnah.' Refer also to ibn Ḥajr, vol. 9, p. 202.

CHAPTER TWO

2.1 Branches of Non-Beneficial Knowledge

An explanation of some of the branches of knowledge that do not benefit has been reported from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. Abū Dāwūd, *al-Marāsīl*, records on the authority of Zayd ibn Aslam that it was said, 'Messenger of Allāh! How astonishing is the knowledge of such-and-such a person!' He inquired, "Of what?" They replied, 'Of people's genealogies.' He remarked, "Knowledge that is of no benefit, the ignorance of which causes no harm."[30]

Abū Nu'aym, *Riyāḍ al-Muta'allimīn*, records this ḥadīth via the route of Baqiyyah; from ibn Jurayj; from 'Aṭā'; from Abū Hurayrah; from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him. This version mentions that they answered, 'He is the most learned of people concerning the genealogies of the Arabs, poetry, and the differences that existed amongst the Arabs', the end of this version adds, "Knowledge is of three types, anything additional is surplus: an unequivocal verse of the Qur'ān, an established Sunnah,

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[30] Abū Dāwūd, *al-Marāsīl*, pp. 50-51.
It was declared ḍa'īf by Suyūṭī #5474 and Albānī, *Ḍa'īf al-Jāmi'* #3725. Refer to Munāwī, vol. 4, p. 431.

and an equitable inheritance."[31] The chain of narration of this version is not authentic; Baqiyyah is a *mudallis*, committing *tadlīs* by avoiding making mention of a narrator who is not trustworthy.

The end of this ḥadīth has also been recorded by Abū Dāwūd and ibn Mājah from ʿAbdullāh ibn ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀs that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Knowledge is of three types, anything additional is surplus: an unequivocal verse of the Qur'ān, an established Sunnah, and an equitable inheritance."[32,33] Its chain of narration contains ʿAbdu'l-Raḥmān ibn Ziyād al-Ifrīqī who is well-known to contain weakness.

[31] Ḥāfiẓ ibn Ḥajr said, 'It is not established, it also quoted as a statement of 'Umar and is not established' as quoted of him by Munāwi, vol. 4, p. 431. The ḥadīth is also recorded by ibn ʿAbdu'l-Barr, #1385-1386 who declared the isnād ḍaʿīf.

[32] Or according to another interpretation: 'an upright obligation' instead of 'an equitable inheritance'. Refer to al-ʿAdhīm'abādī, *ʿAwn al-Maʿbūd*, vol. 8, p. 92.

[33] Abū Dāwūd #2885 and ibn Mājah #54.
The isnād is ḍaʿīf as stated by ibn ʿAbdu'l-Barr #1386 and Mundhirī, as quoted from him in *ʿAwn al-Maʿbūd*, vol. 8, p. 92; Ḥākim #7949 remained silent about it but Dhahabī said it was ḍaʿīf. Refer to Albānī, *Irwā'* [under #1664].

2.2 Genealogy and Astronomy

The command to learn of genealogies such amount as would lead to knowing ones kinfolk has been reported on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Learn of your genealogies such amount as would allow you to join the ties of kinship." Recorded by Tirmidhī and Aḥmad.[34]

Ḥumayd ibn Zanjawayh records this ḥadīth via another route on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Learn of your genealogies such amount as would allow you to join the ties of kinship, then desist. Learn of the Arabic language such amount as would allow you to understand the Book of Allāh, then desist. Learn of astronomy such amount as would allow you to travel in the darkness of land and sea, then desist."[35] Its chain of narration contains the narrator, ibn Lahīʿah.

He also records, via the route of Nuʿaym ibn Abū Hind, that ʿUmar said, 'Learn of astronomy such amount as would allow you to travel through land and sea, then refrain. Learn of genealogies such amount as would allow you to join the ties of kinship and would teach you which women are lawful for you and which are not, then refrain.'[36]

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[34] Tirmidhī #1979 and Aḥmad #8868.

It was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākim#7284 and Dhahabī agreed; refer to Haythamī, vol. 8, pg. 152. It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Suyūṭī #3319 and Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmiʿ* #2965; *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #276.

[35] Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-Īmān* #1723.

[36] Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 3, p. 63. =

Mas'ar reports from Muḥammad ibn 'Ubaidullāh that 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb said, 'Learn of astronomy such amount as would allow you to know the direction of the Qiblah and routes of travel.' Nakha'ī did not see any harm in a person learning enough about astronomy to be guided through the land.[37]

Aḥmad and Isḥāq allowed learning about the phases of the moon as quoted from them by Ḥarb. Isḥāq additionally said that it was allowable to learn the names of the stars such as would allow one to be guided (while travelling). Qatādah disliked that the phases of the moon be learnt,[38] while ibn 'Uyaynah did not allow it; Ḥarb quoted this from them. Ṭāwūs said, 'Perhaps the one who studies the stars and the letters of Abū Jād[39] has nothing in his favour with Allāh,' recorded by Ḥarb. It was also recorded by Ḥumayd ibn Zanjawayh from Ṭāwūs as a saying of ibn 'Abbās.[40] This is to be understood to refer to the knowledge of astrology, not to that knowledge that allows one to navigate through the

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The first sentence has also been recorded by ibn Abī Shaybah, vol. 8, pg. 414 and ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1474 with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād.

[37] Ibn Abī Shaybah, vol. 8, p. 414; ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr, *al-Jāmi'* #1475 and it is ṣaḥīḥ.

[38] Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 3, p. 63. The reason for his dislike was that matters such as the phases of the moon and the alignment of planets are used in astrology.

[39] i.e. assigning values or mystical meanings to the letters of the alphabet. Refer to ibn Taymiyyah, *Majmū' Fatāwā*, vol. 12, p. 62; and ibn Ḥajr, *al-Maṭālib al-'Āliyah*, vol. 3, p. 124.

[40] 'Abdu'l-Razzāq, vol. 11, p. 26 and Bayhaqī, *Sunan*, vol. 8, p. 139, with a strong isnād.

Ibn Abī Shaybah, vol. 8, p. 414; and ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1478 also record this without mention of the letters of Abū Jād and it is ṣaḥīḥ.

earth, the former being totally false and prohibited.[41]

There is a ḥadīth concerning this in which the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Whoever acquires knowledge from the stars has acquired a branch of magic." Recorded by Abū Dāwūd on the authority of ibn 'Abbās.[42] He also records the ḥadīth of Qabīṣāh that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Taking good omens from the flight of birds after frightening them (*'iyāfah*), taking evil omens in things (*ṭiyarah*), and geomancy (*ṭarq*) are all forms of magic."[43],[44] *'Iyāfah* refers to the practice of divination through frightening birds and *ṭarq* refers to

[41] Baghawī, *Sharḥ al-Sunnah*, vol. 12, p. 183, said, 'The prohibited form of knowledge of the stars is that knowledge that leads its proponent to predict future events such as the occurrence of strong wind, the onset of rain, snow, cold and hot weather, the fluctuation in prices of commodities etc., thinking that they can come to know this through the motions of the stars. However this is knowledge that Allāh has kept to Himself and none knows it save Him, ***"Truly Allāh has knowledge of the Hour and sends down abundant rain and knows what is in the womb. No self knows what it will earn tomorrow and no self knows in what land it will die"*** [*Luqmān* (31): 34]. As for that knowledge that comes about through studying the stars, through which one can know matters such as the direction of the Qiblah, this is not prohibited. Allāh, Glorious is He, says, ***"It is He Who has appointed the stars for you so you might be guided by them in the darkness of the land and sea"*** [*al-An'ām* (6): 97].'

[42] Abū Dāwūd #3905 and ibn Mājah #3726.
Its isnād is ṣaḥīḥ and has been declared so by 'Irāqī, vol. 4, p. 117; Nawawī, *Riyāḍ*; Dhahabī, *al-Kabā'ir*, and Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #6074; *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #793.

[43] Refer to 'Adhīm'abādī, vol. 10, p. 403, for an explanation of the terms in this ḥadīth.

[44] Abū Dāwūd #3907 and Aḥmad #15915-20603.
The ḥadīth was declared ḍa'īf by Albānī, *Ghāyatu'l-Marām* #301; and Arna'ūṭ, vol. 25, p. 256.

the practice of divination through drawing lines on the earth.[45] Therefore astrology is false and prohibited, and enacting those actions that lead on from it such as seeking to draw close to stars or offering sacrifices to them constitute disbelief.

As for learning such knowledge as would allow one to navigate through the earth, know the direction of the Qiblah, and know the routes leading to various places, this is permissible in the view of the majority. There is no need to learn any more of this science than this amount and to do so would serve to preoccupy one from learning more important things. It is possible that studying this science in minute detail would lead one to start doubting the directions of the Qiblah that have been set up by the Muslims in their lands, indeed this has actually happened to many astronomers, past and present.[46] This then leads to the belief that the Companions and Tābi'īn prayed in the wrong direction in many of the lands they settled in, and this is a false, invalid belief. This is why Imām Aḥmad rejected the use of the North Star [for determining the direction of the Qiblah], instead saying, 'All that is reported is, "What is between the east and the west is the Qiblah."[47]' Meaning that there is no ḥadīth stating that the North Star or any other star should be given consideration in such matters.

Ibn Mas'ūd rejected the words of Ka'b when he said, 'The heav-

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[45] Or equally the practice of throwing gravel onto the ground and divination by the shapes subsequently formed therein. Refer to Abū Dāwūd #3907

[46] Refer to ibn Qudāmah, *al-Mughnī*, vol. 1, p. 440.

[47] Tirmidhī #344 and ibn Mājah #1011 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.
It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākim #741 with Dhahabī agreeing; Suyūṭī #7858 and Albānī, *Irwā'* #292; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #5584.

enly spheres are subject to determined movement' and likewise such matters were rejected by Mālik and others. Imām Aḥmad even rejected the statement of some astronomers that noon (*zawāl*) occurs at different times in different lands. It is possible that their reasoning behind rejecting this, or at least the reasoning of some of them, was the fact that the Messengers had never spoken about such issues - this despite the fact that the astronomers declare this fact with certainty. It is well possible that devoting oneself to the minutiae of such sciences may lead to severe problems and widespread friction.

Some astronomers used their knowledge to reject the ḥadīth of Descent at the last third of the night[48] by saying, 'The last third of the night occurs at different times in different countries so it is not possible that this Descent occur at one time.' The repugnance of this claim is known in the religion by necessity. If the Messenger, peace and blessing be upon him, or the Rightly-Guided Khalīfs were to have heard such claims, not only would they have not listened to them, but they would have rushed to punish these people or would have considered them amongst the rank and file of the deniers and hypocrites.

[48] Bukhārī #1145-6321-7494 and Muslim #756/1772-1778 record on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Every night, when the last third of the night remains, our Lord, Blessed and Exalted is He, descends to the lowest heaven and says, 'Is there anyone who invokes Me that I may respond? Is there anyone asking of Me that I may give it to him? Is there anyone who asking My forgiveness that I may forgive him?'"

2.3 Delving into the Minutiae of Permissible Sciences

The same applies to delving too deeply into the science of genealogies; there is no need for it. The words of 'Umar and others have preceded concerning its prohibition despite the fact that a group of the Companions and Successors knew this science and studied it.[49]

The same applies to delving too deeply into the Arabic language and its morphology, indeed to do so serves to distract one from learning more important matters, and to devote oneself to it prevents one from acquiring much beneficial knowledge. al-*Qāsim ibn Mukhaymarah disliked Arabic morphology, he said,* 'Its beginning stages is a distraction and its end is transgression,'[50] meaning by delving too deeply into it and its complexities. The same stance was held by Aḥmad who disliked studying the Arabic language too deeply and, when he learned of Abū 'Ubaid doing so, objected by saying, 'It diverts one from studying more important matters.'[51] This is why it is said, 'The Arabic language is like salt on food,' meaning that you take of it as much as would correct ones speech and anything additional spoils it.

The same applies to delving too deeply into mathematics even though it be required to carry out duties such as the apportioning of inheritance, wills, and the division of property amongst those

[49] Amongst whom was Abū Bakr as recorded by Muslim #2490 from 'Ā'ishah.

[50] Abū Khaythamah, *al-'Ilm* #150.

[51] Ibn Hānī', *Masā'il al-Imām Aḥmad*, vol. 2, p. 167.

who are due it.[52] Anything additional to this is merely mental exercise and serves to sharpen the mind, there is no need for it and to delve into it preoccupies one from that which is more important.

As for those sciences that were invented after the time of the Companions, whose proponents claim that they are true knowledge and that whoever is not aware of them is either an ignoramus or misguided, all of them are innovations and are to be counted amongst the newly invented affairs that have been prohibited.[53]

2.4 Discussing *al-Qadr*

From amongst these sciences are those innovated by the Mu'tazila in their discussion of Qadr[54] and setting up analogies for Allāh while a clear prohibition has been mentioned against delving into Qadr. Ibn Ḥibbān and Ḥākim record the ḥadīth of ibn 'Abbās that the Messenger of Allāh, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "This nation shall always remain steadfast and balanced so long as they do not discuss [the final destination] of children and the divine decree."[55] This has also been reported as

[52] Refer also to ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr, vol. 2, pp. 789-791.

[53] Due to his, peace and blessing be upon him, saying, "Whoever introduces into this matter of ours that which is not part of it, it is rejected." Recorded by Bukhārī #2697 and Muslim #1718.

[54] Refer to Asha'rī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, pp. 155+.

[55] Ibn Ḥibbān #6724.
Haythamī, vol. 7, p. 202, declared its isnād ṣaḥīḥ as did Ḥākim #93 with Dhahabī agreeing, so too did Albānī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #1515.

a statement of ibn 'Abbās only and some declared this to be the stronger case.

Bayhaqī records the ḥadīth of ibn Mas'ūd that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "When my Companions are mentioned, refrain, and when the stars are mentioned, refrain also."[56] This has been reported via a number of routes, all of the isnāds being problematic. It is reported that ibn 'Abbas said to Maymūn ibn Mihrān, 'Beware of researching into the stars for they effectuate fortune telling, beware of researching into the divine decree for this effectuates heresy, beware of abusing any of the Companions of Muḥammad, peace and blessing be upon him, for Allāh would throw you face first into the Fire.'[57] Abū Nu'aym also reports this as a statement of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, but it is not authentic.

The prohibition of delving into the divine decree encompasses a number of matters:

1) Using parts of the Book to contradict other parts such that the one who affirms the divine decree quote a particular verse, while the one who denies it quote another verse and they start quarrelling. It is reported that such an event happened during the time of the Messenger of

[56] Reported by Abū Nu'aym, vol. 4, p. 114 #4953; and Ṭabarānī, *al-Kabir* #10488.

'Irāqī, vol. 1, p. 50, declared the isnād ḥasan; Suyūṭī #615 declared the ḥadīth ḥasan with Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #545; *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #34 ruling it ṣaḥīḥ.

[57] Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 3, p. 65. Sahmī, *Tārikh al-Jurjān*, p. 429, records it as a ḥadīth of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, on the authority of ibn 'Abbās with a ḍa'īf isnād.

Allāh, peace and blessing be upon him, whereupon he became angry and prohibited it.[58] Such matters are to be considered as disputing about the Qur'ān and this has been prohibited.[59]

2) Discussing the divine decree, either by way of affirmation or negation, by rationalising and employing logical arguments. This is exemplified by the saying of the Qadariyyah, 'Were Allāh to decree everything and then punish people, He would be unjust and oppressive,' and the saying of their diametric opposite,[60] 'Allāh has coerced the servants into performing their actions,' and the likes.

3) Delving into the workings of the divine decree, the prohibition of which has been reported from 'Alī and others from amongst the Salaf. This is because the servants will never be able to understand its true reality.

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[58] Muslim #2666 on the authority of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr.

[59] Abū Dāwūd #4603 records on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Arguing about the Qur'ān constitutes disbelief."

It is also recorded by Ḥākim #2882 and Dhahabī said that it meets the criteria of Muslim. Suyūṭī #9187 ruled it to be ṣaḥīḥ as did Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #6687.

[60] i.e. The Jabariyyah.

2.5 Discussing the *Dhāt* of Allāh

Linked to this is the innovation concocted by the Muʿtazila, and those who traverse their path, in their discussion of the essence (*dhāt*) of Allāh, Exalted is He, and His Attributes through the medium of rationalisation. This is of a greater danger than delving into the divine decree because discussing the divine decree is to discuss the actions of Allāh whereas here one is discussing His very essence and Attributes! This group is divided into two categories:

The first: Those who negate much of what is reported in the Book and Sunnah concerning the Attributes due to the implication, in their view, of a likeness between the creation and Creator. From amongst these are the Muʿtazila who said, 'If He can be seen, He must be a body because one requires a direction in which to see', 'If His speech can be heard, He must be a body.' Those who negated His *istawā* did so by means of the same reasoning. This is the path of the Muʿtazila and the Jahmiyyah about whom the Salaf were agreed as to their being innovators and misguided. This path of theirs has been traversed, in some matters, by many of those who are attributed to the Sunnah and Ḥadīth amongst the latter generations.

The second: Those who wished to affirm the Attributes via logical rationalisations that are not mentioned in the narrations and through these they refuted the stances of the first group. Examples of this lie with Maqātil ibn Sulaymān and those who followed him such as Nūḥ ibn Abū Maryam; these were in turn followed by a group of the *Muḥaddithīn* of the past and present.

This is also the way of the Karrāmiyyah.[61] From amongst these were those who affirmed a body for Allāh, either in meaning or wording, as an outcome of their affirming His Attributes. Others from amongst them affirmed attributes for Allāh that have not been mentioned in the Book and Sunnah such as 'movement' which they believe to be necessary outcomes of His Attributes that have been established. The Salaf refuted the manner employed by Maqātil in his refutation of al-Jahm and they went to great lengths in censuring him to the extent that some of them considered it lawful to kill him! Amongst these was Makkī ibn Ibrāhīm, the teacher of Bukhārī.

The correct position in all of this is the position of the Righteous Salaf in their leaving the verses and aḥādīth concerning the Attributes as they came without explanation,[62] asking how, or likening them to creation. There is nothing at all contravening this position that is authentically reported from them, especially Imām Aḥmad. Neither is anything reported from them proving that they probed into their meanings or propounded analogies and similitudes for them. This, even though there were some who lived close to the time of Aḥmad who did do some of this, following the way laid out by Maqātil, but they are not to be followed in this. Those who should be followed are the Imāms of Islām such as ibn al-Mubārak, Mālik, Thawrī, Awzā'ī, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad, Isḥāq, Abū 'Ubaid and their likes.

One will not find anything in the words of those mentioned above that bears resemblance to the words of the Speculative Theologians (*Mutakallimīn*) let alone the words of the philoso-

[61] Refer to al-Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayn al-Firaq*, p. 215.

[62] i.e. ta'wīl as discussed by ibn Taymiyyah in many of his works.

phers, indeed this is not to be found in the words of anyone who has not been censured or disparaged. Abū Zur'ah al-Rāzī said, 'Whoever possesses knowledge, yet his knowledge is not refined, and as such requires speculative theology (*kalām*) to spread it, you should have nothing to do with him!'

2.6 The Rationalisation of the People of Opinion

From amongst the innovated sciences is that which has been introduced by the Legal Jurists belonging to the People of Opinion comprising rational principles and rules which govern the legal rules and regulation, not caring whether they conform to the Sunnah or oppose it. The root basis of these principles may well be based upon interpretations of texts from the Book and Sunnah, however others opposed the interpretations employed. This was what the Imāms of Islām rejected when they refuted the Legal Jurists amongst the People of Opinion in Ḥijāz and Irāq, indeed they went to great lengths in censuring and refuting them. As for the Imāms and Legal Jurists amongst the Ahlu'l-Ḥadīth, they followed any authentic ḥadīth provided that the ḥadīth was acted upon by the Companions and those who came after them, or at least by some of them. As for those aḥādīth which the Salaf unanimously agreed to leave, it is not permissible to act by them since they left acting by them because of their certain knowledge that they should not be enacted. 'Umar ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz said, 'Take from opinion that which conforms to the practice of those who came before you for they were more knowledgeable than you.'

As for the specific case where the ḥadīth contradicted the prac-

tice of the inhabitants of Madīnah, Mālik was of the opinion that the practice of the inhabitants of Madīnah should be adhered to whereas the majority adhered to the ḥadīth.[63]

2.7 Debating About the Religion

From amongst the matters rejected by the Imāms of the Salaf was argumentation and disputation about issues concerning the lawful and prohibited,[64] this was not the way of the Imāms of Islām. This was innovated later by the Legal Jurists of Kūfah and Baṣrah, for example, in their authoring works dealing with the differences amongst the Shāfi'īs and Ḥanafīs and then devoting a great deal of time and energy in discussion and argumentation [as to which stances were correct]. Matters went to such an extreme that this became the limit of their knowledge, it preoccupied them, and distracted them from beneficial knowledge. All of this is from the newly invented matters.

The Salaf rejected this and there is a ḥadīth recorded in the Sunan concerning this in which the Prophet, peace and blessing

[63] Refer to ibn Taymiyyah, *Qā'idah fī 'Amal Ahl al-Madīnah*, which is available in English with the title, 'The Madinan Way.'

[64] Ājurrī #112-113 records from Muslim ibn Yasār that he said, 'Beware of disputation, for through it does the scholar slip into ignorance and by means of it does Satan desire to cause him to slip and err.' The isnād is ṣaḥīḥ. Ājurrī #115 records from Mu'āwiyah ibn Qurrah that he said, 'Arguing about the religion destroys ones deeds.' The isnād is also ṣaḥīḥ.

Even aiding someone who is debating could be a grave wrong. Ḥākim #7051 records on the authority of ibn 'Umar that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Whoever, without due right, comes to the aid of one debating, is under the displeasure of Allāh until he withdraws." Ḥākim said that the isnād was ṣaḥīḥ and Dhahabī agreed.

be upon him, said, "A nation never went astray after being guided except by means of disputation,"[65] then he recited the verse,

مَا ضَرَبُوهُ لَكَ إِلَّا جَدَلًا بَلْ هُمْ قَوْمٌ خَصِمُونَ ﴿٥٨﴾

They only say this to you for argument's sake, they are indeed a disputatious people.[66]

Some of the Salaf said, 'When Allāh desires good for His servant, He opens for him the door of action. When Allāh desires evil for His servant, He locks the door to action and opens *instead the door of disputation.'*[67]

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[65] Tirmidhī #3253 and ibn Mājah #48 on the authority of Abū Umāmah.

Tirmidhī ruled it to be hasan ṣaḥīḥ; it was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākim #3674 and Dhahabī agreed; it was ruled ḥasan by Suyūṭī #7934 and Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #5633.

[66] *al-Zukhruf* (43): 58

Ājurrī, vol. 1, p. 434, said, 'When the People of Knowledge amongst the Tābi'īn and the Imāms who followed them heard this, they did not debate or dispute about matters concerning the religion and they warned the Muslims against this as well. They enjoined the Muslims to follow the Sunnah and that which the Companions were upon, may Allāh be pleased with them all. This is the way of the People of Truth, those to whom Allāh, Exalted is He, has granted His divine accord.'

[67] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 8, p. 405 #12690, as a statement of Ma'rūf al-Karkhī. He also recorded #12691 that Ma'rūf said, 'For a person to discuss matters that do not concern him is a sign that Allāh, Exalted is He, has forsaken him.'

Abū Dāwūd #4800 records on the authority of Abū Umāmah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "I stand guarantor that a house will be built on the outskirts of Paradise for whoever abandons argumentation, even if he be in the right; a house will be built in the middle of Paradise for the one who abandons lying even if it be in jest; a house will be built in the most lofty part of Paradise for one who makes good his morals and manners."

It was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #273.

Mālik said, 'I have met the inhabitants of this city and they used to abhor this excessiveness in which we find the people today,'[68] meaning delving into minute details of issues and widening them. He used to censure excessive speech and legal verdicts saying, 'They speak as if they were lascivious camels[69] saying, "It is like is this, it is like that" being reckless with their words.' He used to abhor answering when faced with many questions and would say, 'Allāh says,

وَيَسْـَٔلُونَكَ عَنِ ٱلرُّوحِ قُلِ ٱلرُّوحُ مِنْ أَمْرِ رَبِّى

"They ask you about the soul, say: the soul is my Lord's concern"[70]

and he would then not respond to the question.'[71] It was asked, 'A person who has knowledge of the Sunnah, should he argue in order to defend it?' He replied, 'No, he should inform the other of the Sunnah, if he accepts, fine, otherwise he should remain silent.' He would say, 'Arguing and disputing about knowledge takes away the light of knowledge,' and, 'Disputing about knowledge hardens the heart and breeds cursing.' Frequently would he say in response to questions that he was asked, 'I do not know.'

Imām Aḥmad traversed the same path as that followed by Mālik in this.

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[68] Khaṭīb, *al-Faqīh wa'l-Mutafaqqih*, vol. 2, p. 15 #629 and ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #2062 with ṣaḥīḥ isnād.

[69] This is a comparison to the haste, rashness, and recklessness of camels when overcome with lust.

[70] *al-Isrā'* (17): 85

[71] This is an example of the types of issues people were delving into at that time.

There also occurs a prohibition concerning asking excessive questions,[72] asking tricky and difficult questions,[73] and also about events that have yet to occur.[74] Mentioning the narrations concerning this would only prolong the discussion beyond what is necessary.

However, despite all this, there does occur in the words of the Imāms such as Mālik, Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad and Isḥāq, a clear indicator to the sources of jurisprudence and the intellectual basis of the divine laws, given in a succinct and comprehensive way, such that one can understand the meaning without undue difficulty. Their words also contain a refutation of those who oppose the Sunnah, phrased in the nicest of words and composed in the best of ways such that the person who understands them is left in no need of comprehending the laborious discussions of the Speculative Theologians when they tried to do the same. Indeed their lengthy, laborious discussions could be completely devoid of any of the correctness that is found in the concise statements of the Salaf and the Imāms.

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[72] Bukhārī #1477-2408-5975-6473-7292 and Muslim #1715 on the authority of Mughīrah ibn Shu'bah. Bukhārī #4745-5259-5308-7304 and Muslim #1492 on the authority of Sahl ibn Sa'd. Muslim #1715 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.
Refer to ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #2037-2053.

[73] Aḥmad #23687-23688 and Abū Dāwūd #3656.
Munāwī, vol. 6, p. 391, said the isnād was ḍa'īf and it was ruled ḍa'īf by Albānī, *Ḍa'īf al-Jāmi'* #6035.

[74] Refer to ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr, #2055-2069.

2.8 The Way and Wisdom of the *Salaf*

Therefore the Salaf, when they refrained from excessive argumentation and debating, did not do so because of ignorance and inability, rather because of knowledge and the fear of Allāh! Those who came after them who did speak much and went to great lengths in widening issues, did not do so because they had knowledge that the Salaf did not, rather because of the love of speech and lack of scrupulousness (*wara*ʿ).[75] When al-Ḥasan heard a group of people arguing he said, 'These have tired of worship, speech has become easy and trivial to them, there scrupulousness has lessened, and this is why they speak such.'[76] Mahdī ibn Maymūn said, 'I heard Muḥammad ibn Sīrīn say, whenever a person tried to argue sophistically with him, "I know what he means, and if I wished to argue with you, I know full well the methods of disputation,"' and in another narration, 'I know more about disputation than you, but I will not dispute with you.'[77] Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī said, 'I have never argued.' 'Abdu'l-Karīm al-Jazarī said,

[75] Bayhaqī, *al-Zuhd al-Kabīr* #832 and Harawī, *Dhamm al-Kalām* #114 record from Ḍaḥḥāk that he said, 'As for them, they learnt *wara*ʿ, however there will come upon you a time wherein people will merely learn how to speak.'

ibn al-Qayyim, *al-Fawā'id*, p. 118, said that *wara*ʿ was, 'Leaving all that one fears may harm his Hereafter.' al-Jurjānī, *al-Taʿrīfāt*, p. 325, said that it was 'The leaving of anything doubtful for fear of falling into the prohibited. It is also said that it is to adhere firmly to all beautiful deeds.' Ṭabarānī, *al-Kabīr* records on the authority of Hudhayfah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "The excellence of knowledge is better than the excellence of worship. The best of your religion is *wara*ʿ." Mundhirī said that its isnād was ḥasan and it was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb* #68.

[76] Aḥmad, *al-Zuhd*, p. 272, and Abū Nuʿaym, vol. 2, p. 178 #1848.

[77] Ājurrī #134 with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād.

'A person of scrupulousness will never dispute.'[78] Ja'far ibn Muḥammad said, 'Beware of disputing about this religion for it preoccupies the heart and breeds hypocrisy.'[79] 'Umar ibn 'Abdu'l-'Azīz used to say, 'When you hear disputation, refrain.' He also said, 'Whoever makes his religion a tool for disputation will frequently change his stances.'[80] He also said, 'The predecessors stopped at a point out of knowledge, through penetrative insight did they refrain, even though they were more capable of arguing [than their opponents] were they to have argued.' There are many quotes from the Salaf concerning this.

Many of the later people have been tried with this, thinking that one who increases his words and arguments, and disputes about matters of the religion is more knowledgeable than one who does not. This is naught but pure ignorance! Just look to the senior Companions such as Abū Bakr, 'Umar, 'Alī, Mu'ādh, ibn Mas'ūd, and Zayd ibn Thābit; what was their state? Their words were less than the words of ibn 'Abbās yet they had more knowledge than he! Similarly the words of their successors were more than those of the Companions even though the latter had more knowledge than the former. The words of the next generation of successors were more than those of the first generation successors even though the latter knew more than the former.

Therefore knowledge is not narrating a great deal, nor is it having an opinion on everything, rather it is a light which is im-

[78] Ājurrī #123 and ibn Baṭṭah, p. 123, with a ḥasan isnād.

[79] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 3, p. 230 #3799.

[80] Ājurrī #116 and Dārimī #310 with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād.

planted in the heart[81] by which the servant comes to understand the truth, employs it to differentiate between truth and falsehood, and is able to express that truth in brief, concise words. The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, was granted pithiness in speech[82] and his words were the most concise of words.[83] All of this goes to show why there is a prohibition against excessive speech and being loose in ones words.[84]

The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Allāh never sent a Prophet except as a conveyor; and doctored, elaborate speech is from Satan,"[85] meaning by this that the Prophet, peace

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[81] Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1398-1399 records that Imām Mālik said, 'Knowledge does not come about by a great deal of narration, instead it is a light that Allāh implants in the hearts,' and, 'Knowledge and wisdom are a light through which Allāh guides whoever He wills, they do not come about by knowing many issues.'

[82] Bukhārī #2977-6998-7013-7273 and Muslim #523 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

[83] The author, *Jāmi' al-'Ulūm wa'l-Ḥikam*, vol 1, p. 54, references this to Abū Ya'lā and Dāruquṭnī.

[84] Bukhārī #1477-2408-5975-6473-7292 and Muslim #1715 on the authority of al-Mughīrah.

Aḥmad #8822 and Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab* #4970 also record on the authority of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Should I not inform you of the worst of you? Those who prattle, those who speak rashly and without care, and the arrogant braggart. Should I not inform you of the best of you? Those of you who have the best morals and manners."

It was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #751-791-1891 and Arna'ūṭ, vol. 14, p. 418.

[85] 'Abdu'l-Razzāq, vol. 11, p. 163, as a murṣal report.

However the last half of the ḥadīth has been recorded by Aḥmad #5687 and

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and blessing be upon him, only ever spoke to the extent required of him to convey the message. As for excessive, doctored, and elaborate speech, it is blameworthy. The sermons of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, would be brief and to the point,[86] and his speech was such that the number of words employed could easily be counted.[87] He said, "Indeed from speech is that which is magic." He said this by way of censure, not by way of commendation as thought by some. Whoever considers the context of these words would be certain of this. Tirmidhī and others quote the ḥadīth of 'Abdullāh ibn 'Amr that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Allāh hates the excessively eloquent among men, those who move their tongues between their teeth[88] just as cows do."[89] There are many narrations

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Bukhārī, *Adab al-Mufrad* #875 with an isnād meeting the criteria of Bukhārī and Muslim. Refer to Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ Adab al-Mufrad* #671 and Arna'ūṭ, vol. 9, p. 498.

Bukhārī, *Adab al-Mufrad* #876 also authentically reports from 'Umar that he said, 'Long-winded speech during sermons is from the prattle of Satan.'

[86] Muslim #866 on the authority of Jābir.

[87] Muslim #2493 on the authority of 'Ā'ishah.

Ibn Abī al-'Izz, *Sharḥ 'Aqīdah at-Ṭaḥāwiyyah*, p. 19, said, 'Our Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, was granted pithiness in speech, he was sent with universal, comprehensive sciences and knowledge pertaining to this world and the Hereafter in the best and most complete of fashions. However each time someone introduced an innovation, they went to great lengths in justifying it and this is why the discussions of the latter people are long and laborious and of very little benefit. In contrast, the words of the early generations are few but of great blessings.'

[88] i.e. over carefully and excessively pronouncing each word.

[89] Tirmidhī #2853 and Abū Dāwūd #5005.

Tirmidhī ruled it to be ḥasan as did Suyūṭī #1849 and it is to be found in

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from the Prophet and the Companions, such as 'Umar, Sa'd, ibn Mas'ūd, 'A'ishah, and others carrying this meaning.

Therefore it is necessary to realise that not everyone who speaks a lot, delving into great detail, with regards normal speech and knowledge is more knowledgeable than one who does not.

We have been tried by the ignorant amongst people who start believing that just because someone speaks a lot, he is more knowledgeable than those who have preceded him! Amongst them are some who believe that a particular person is more knowledgeable than the Companions and those who came after them simply because he goes to minute details when explaining matters and has an opinion on everything. Some of this group say that he is just more knowledgeable than the famous Legal Jurists who enjoy a following, however this statement of theirs implies the same as the previous. This is because those famous Legal Jurists spoke more than those who came before them, hence if someone who came after them knows more than them just because of his detailed discussions, then for sure he should be more knowledgeable than those who spoke less than them such as Thawrī, Awzā'ī, Layth, ibn al-Mubārak, those of their generation, and those who came before them of the Successors and Companions. Such a stance constitutes clear disrespect of a serious

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Albānī, *al-Ṣaḥīḥah* #880; *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #1875.

Munāwī, vol. 2, pg. 359, 'The resemblance lies in the fact that this person moves his tongue over his teeth and mouth while speaking just as the cow moves its tongue when eating.'

Bayhaqī, *Shu'ab* #4978 records from ibn al-Mubārak that he said, 'I found that our companions would suddenly end their speech,' the sub-narrator explained this by saying, 'Meaning out of fear that they would fall under the ḥadīth about a people moving their tongues in their mouths as a cow does when it eats.'

nature towards the righteous Salaf and indeed amounts to having an evil opinion of them and accusing them of ignorance or deficiency in knowledge. There is no strength or ability except with Allāh![90]

Ibn Mas'ūd spoke the truth when he said, 'Amongst mankind, they had the most righteous of hearts, they had the most profound and in-depth knowledge, and they were the least pretentious,'[91] thereby indicating that those to come after them are of a lesser stature with regards knowledge but more pretentious. The likes of this has also been reported from ibn 'Umar.[92]

Ibn Mas'ūd also said, 'You are in a time in which the scholars are many but whose speakers are few. After you will come a time in which the scholars are few but the speakers are many.'[93] Hence

[90] Ājurrī #127 records from Awzā'ī that he said, 'Follow the footsteps of those who preceded you even if it mean that the people absolve themselves of you; beware of the opinions of people even if they beautify and embellish their words.'

[91] Recorded by ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1810 with a ḍa'īf isnād, however the narration is good. Almost the exact same wording is reported from al-Ḥasan by ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1807 with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād and a similar narration is recorded by Abū Nu'aym, vol. 1, p. 378 #1060 from ibn 'Umar.

[92] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 1, p. 378 #1060 , with a ḍa'īf isnād.

[93] Abū Khaythamah #109 and Ṭabarānī, *al-Kabīr* #8066.

It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by ibn Ḥajr, vol. 10, p. 510, and Albānī in his notes to Abū Khaythamah.

Ṭabarānī also records that ibn Mas'ūd said, 'You are in a time in which the prayer is lengthy and the sermons are short; the scholars are many and the speakers are few. There will come a time when the prayer is short and the sermon is lengthy; the speakers will be many and the scholars few...' Haythamī, vol. 7, p. 285, said, 'Its narrators are those of the Ṣaḥīḥ.'

whoever's knowledge is great but speech is little is to be commended, and whoever is the opposite is to be censured.

The Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, testified that the people of Yemen had faith and understanding.[94] The people of Yemen are the least of people with regards speech and delving into the minutiae of the various sciences. However, their knowledge is beneficial knowledge that has taken root in their hearts and they express of it only that which is required. This is *beneficial understanding.*

The best of what exists with regards the sciences of exegesis of the Qur'ān, explanation of ḥadīth, and discussion of the lawful and prohibited is that which is related from the Companions, the Successors, and the following generations until the generation of the famous Imāms we have previously referred to. The proof that this portion is indeed the choicest of these sciences, arising from the most profound depth of understanding and discernment, is that which occurred after them of delving into minute details and widening issues, most of which contains no benefit unless it be an explanation of their words. As for that which contradicts their speech, most of it is false or contains no benefit whatsoever.

Their words suffice us and more, there is no truth that one finds in the words of those who came after except that it can be found in their words in the most succinct and comprehensive of ways. There is no falsehood to be found in the words of those who came after except that you will find in their words, after understanding and due consideration, a clarification of its falsity. There is to be found in their words such profound meanings and

[94] Bukhārī #3499-4388-4390 and Muslim #52 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

subtle derivations that those who came after would never have even begun to broach, let alone been guided to!

Whoever does not take knowledge from their words will miss out on all that good as well as falling into much falsehood by way of following those who came after. However, whoever wishes to collate their words is in need of knowing the authentic from the weak. This comes about by knowing the science of authenticating and disparaging narrators (*jarḥ wa'l-ta'dīl*) and the defects of ḥadīth. Whoever does not know this cannot be sure of what he quotes from them and quickly will such a person confuse the truth of it with the falsehood. Such a person is not to be depended upon when he reports from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, or the Salaf because of his ignorance of the authentic from the weak. It is even possible that such a person, as a consequence of this ignorance and subsequent confusion, go to the extreme of believing that all of it is false.

Awzā'ī said, 'Knowledge is that which the Companions of Muḥammad, peace and blessing be upon him, conveyed, anything else is not to be considered knowledge.'[95] This was also stated by Imām Aḥmad and he said concerning the Successors, 'You are free to choose,' meaning it is up to you if you wish to record their words or leave them. Zuhrī used to write their narrations and Sāliḥ ibn Kaysān disagreed with him on this only to later regret that he himself never wrote them.

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[95] Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1420-1421, the first narration has the additional wording, 'O Baqiyyah! Only ever mention good of the Companions of Muḥammad, peace and blessing be upon him, and do the same of your generation. If you hear anyone else doing anything else it is as if he is saying, "I am better than him." ' The first is ṣaḥīḥ and the second is ḥasan.

In our times it is imperative that the words of the Imāms of the Salaf, who are followed up to the time of Shāfi'ī, Aḥmad, Isḥāq and Abū 'Ubaid, be written down. Let the people beware of those affairs that happened after them, for many new matters occurred amongst which was the appearance of those who attributed themselves to following the Sunnah and Ḥadīth such as the Ẓāhiriyyah and their likes. The Ẓāhiriyyah often oppose the Sunnah due to their founders' deviation from the stances held by the Imāms and following his own understanding, or his taking to those texts that the Imāms before him did not take to.

As for delving into the words of the speculative theologians and the philosophers, this is pure evil! Rare is it to find one who delves into them without being sullied by some of their filth. Aḥmad said, 'None delves into speculative theology (*kalām*) except that he takes on board the ways of Jahm.' He, as well as the other Imāms of the Salaf, used to warn against the People of speculative theology (*Ahlu'l-Kalām*) even if their intention be to defend the Sunnah.

As for what is to be found in the words of those who love this rhetoric and follow its adherents in censuring those who do not excel in disputation and debate, accusing them of ignorance and Ḥashw,[96] - or that they do not have gnosis of Allāh, or that they do not possess true understanding of this religion - all of this is from following the footsteps of Satan. We take refuge with Allāh from such a person.

[96] This is a word that was often employed by the innovators to abuse Ahlu'l-Sunnah.

2.9 The 'Inner Sciences'

From those sciences that have been innovated is the discussion and analysis of the 'Inner Sciences' i.e. sciences dealing with matters such as gnosis, the actions of the heart, and related issues based upon pure opinion, spiritual experience (*dhawq*), or spiritual realisation (*kashf*). This contains a great danger and was rejected by the greatest of the Imāms such as Aḥmad and others.

Sulaymān [al-Dārānī] used to say, 'Sometimes a point of inspiration occurs to me as it does to the nation [of ascetics], but I do not accept it except by the testimony of two just witnesses: the Book and the Sunnah.'[97]

Junayd said, 'This knowledge of ours is governed by the Book and the Sunnah, whoever has not read the Qur'ān or written the ḥadīth is not to be followed in this knowledge of ours.'[98] This knowledge has been greatly abused and some of those who laid claim to it fell into various forms of heresy and hypocrisy: claiming that the *Awliyā'* were better than the Prophets,[99] or that they had no need of the Prophets, belittling the laws conveyed by the Messengers, having the belief of incarnation and unification (*ḥulūl wa'l-ittiḥād*), the belief of the unity of being (*waḥdatu'l-wujūd*), and other such matters which form the foundations of disbelief, sin, and transgression; such as the claim that many of the prohibited matters are lawful to them. Through this approach they have in-

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[97] Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyyah*, p. 78.

[98] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 10, p. 274 #15216, who mentions the additional words, '...or attained fiqh of the religion is not to be followed...'

[99] The opinion of the likes of ibn al-'Arabī and al-Ḥallāj.

troduced many affairs into this religion that have nothing to do with it. They thought some of these affairs would engender softness of the heart such as singing and dancing.[100] They thought other matters would serve to refine the soul such as passionately desiring forbidden pictures and looking at them. Yet others they thought would break the soul or lead to humility such as the desire for clothes and other such matters whose legitimacy has not been proven by the Divine Law (*Sharī'ah*). Indeed some of these matters actually distract away from the remembrance of Allāh and prayer such as singing and looking at that which is prohibited to see; in this they resemble those who took their religion as mere play and amusement.

2.10 Beneficial Knowledge with regards the 'Inner Sciences'

Beneficial knowledge in this arena is to strictly follow the texts of the Book and Sunnah, to understand their meanings, and in order to do so, confine oneself to what has been reported from the Companions, the Successors, and their successors in matters to do with the Qur'ān, ḥadīth, the lawful and prohibited, asceticism, softening of the heart, gnosis, and other such things. It is upon one to exert himself in distinguishing the authentic narration from the weak, then after this to exert himself in correctly understanding the authentic narrations. In this there is sufficiency for any who possess intelligence and adequate material for those who seek beneficial knowledge.

[100] The author, may Allāh have mercy upon him, discusses this issue at length in his treatise, *Mas'alah al-Samā'*.

Whoever suffices with this, makes his intention sincere - seeking the Face of Allāh, Mighty and Magnificent - and seeks His aid, He will aid him, guide him, grant him the divine accord, make him firm, grant him understanding, and bestow upon him inspiration. At this juncture this knowledge will sprout its special fruit: the fear of Allāh, just as He, Mighty and Magnificent, says,

إِنَّمَا يَخْشَى ٱللَّهَ مِنْ عِبَادِهِ ٱلْعُلَمَٰٓؤُاْ

It is only the learned amongst His servants who truly fear Allāh.[101]

Ibn Mas'ūd and others said, 'Sufficient knowledge is it that one fears Allāh, and sufficient ignorance is it to be deceived of Allāh.'[102] Some of the Salaf said, 'Knowledge is not narrating a great deal but knowledge is the fear of Allāh.'[103] Others said, 'Whoever fears Allāh is the scholar and whoever disobeys him is the ignoramus.'[104] There are many quotes from them carrying this meaning.

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101 *Fāṭir* (35): 28

102 Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1514; Aḥmad, *al-Zuhd*, p. 158; ibn Abī Shaybah and it is ṣaḥīḥ.

Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #962 and Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 4, p. 470, also quotes the saying of Masrūq, 'Sufficient knowledge is it that one fear Allāh, and sufficient ignorance is it for one to be deceived by his own actions.' It is also ṣaḥīḥ.

103 Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1400-1401; Ṭabarānī, *al-Kabīr* #8534 as the words of ibn Mas'ūd.

Haythamī, vol. 10, p. 235, declared the isnād to be munqaṭi'.

104 Ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1544 quotes the first half as a statement of 'Aṭā' with a ḍa'īf isnād. However the meaning is established and quoted from a group of the Salaf as referenced in Suyūṭī, *al-Durr al-Manthūr*, vol. 5, p. 470.

The reason for this is that beneficial knowledge effectuates two matters:

1. Knowledge of Allāh and what befits Him of Beautiful Names, Lofty Attributes, and Awe-Inspiring Actions. This necessarily leads to venerating Him, glorifying Him, having fear of Him, being in awe of Him, loving Him, having hope in Him, putting ones reliance in Him, being content with His decree, and bearing His trials with patience.

2. Knowledge of what He loves and is pleased with and that which He detests and angers Him of beliefs, actions - the outer and inner, and statements. This leads one to rush towards performing that which Allāh loves and is pleased with and avoiding all that He detests and angers Him.

When knowledge sprouts these fruits, it is beneficial knowledge. When knowledge is beneficial and takes root in the heart, the heart fears Allāh, submits to Him, and humbles itself in awe, glorification, fear, love, and veneration. When this happens the soul is content with the humblest of lawful worldly provisions and this in turn leads it to turn away from the world and all temporal effects. As such their remains no property, status, or surplus effects that is looked at wantonly by the servant which would be a cause for the decrease of his portion with Allāh of the bliss of the Hereafter. This was stated by ibn 'Umar and others from amongst the Salaf and has been reported from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him.

When all of this happens, a special relationship between Allāh, Mighty and Magnificent, and the servant is engendered. If he asks, He grants, and and if he supplicates, He answers as is mentioned in the ḥadīth qudsī, "...my servant continues to draw closer

to Me by performing the optional deeds until I love him. When I love him, I am his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his hand with which he strikes, and his leg with which he walks. Were he to ask of Me, I would grant him, and were he to take refuge with Me, I would grant him refuge,"[105] and in another narration, "Were he to supplicate to Me, I would respond."[106]

In his, peace and blessing be upon him, advice that was directed to ibn ʿAbbās there occurs, "Be mindful of Allāh, He will be mindful of you. Be mindful of Allāh and you will find Him in front of you. Know Allāh in times of ease and He will know you in times of hardship."[107]

The goal of the servant is that there be, in his heart, a specific gnosis between him and His Lord whereby he finds Him close all the time and takes comfort with Him in times of solitude. He finds pleasure in remembering Him, supplicating to Him, privately discoursing with Him, and serving Him. None would experience this except he who obeys Him in open and in secret. It was asked of Wuhayb ibn al-Ward, 'Can one who disobeys [Allāh] experience the sweetness of obedience?' He replied, 'No, and neither can one who merely wishes to disobey him.'[108]

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[105] Bukhārī #6502 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah.

[106] Aḥmad #26193 on the authority of ʿĀʾishah.
Refer to Haythamī, vol. 10, p. 269; and ibn Rajab, *Jāmiʿ al-ʿUlūm*, vol. 2, pp. 330+.

[107] The wording is that of Aḥmad #2669-2763-2803 and it is also recorded by Tirmidhī #2516 who ruled it to be ḥasan ṣaḥīḥ.
Albānī ruled it to be ṣaḥīḥ in *Ẓilāl al-Jannah* #315.

[108] Abū Nuʿaym, vol. 8, p. 154 #11689.

When this is actualised in the servant, he can then be said to have gnosis of his Lord and a special relationship develops between the two such that when he asks, He grants; when he supplicates, He answers. Sha'wānah said to Fuḍayl when he asked her to supplicate for him, 'Does there not exist between you and your Lord a relationship such that if you supplicate to Him, he answers you?' upon which he fell unconscious.[109]

The servant continually faces hardship and difficulty in this world, in the *barzakh*[110] and at the place of the final standing. When there exists this special gnosis between the servant and His Lord, Allāh will suffice him during all of this. This is what is indicated in his, peace and blessing be upon him, advice to ibn 'Abbās, "Know Allāh in times of ease and He will know you in times of hardship."

It was asked of Ma'rūf, 'What is it that has roused in you the desire for seclusion?' The questioner mentioned death, the grave, the place of the final standing, Paradise and Hell as possible causes to which he replied, 'All of this is in His hand, when there exists a gnosis between you and Him, He suffices you during all of this.'

So beneficial knowledge is that which engenders a gnosis be-

[109] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 8, p. 116 #11567, the narrative continues to quote Fuḍayl as saying, 'Ennoble us with the nobility of obedience and do not humiliate us with the humiliation of disobedience.'

[110] *al-Barzakh*, refers to a barrier placed between a person who has deceased and this worldly life. It is a way of referring to the first stages of the life of the Hereafter. A very good treatment of *al-Barzakh* and the issues related to it can be found in Muhammad al-Jibaly, 'Life in *al-Barzakh*' [*Al-Kitaab & As-Sunnah* publishing, 1998].

tween the servant and his Lord and leads to it such that he comes to know his Lord, singles him out alone in belief and worship, takes comfort in Him, develops a sense of shyness (*ḥayā'*) of Him, and worships Him as if he sees Him.

This is why a group of the Companions said, 'The first knowledge to be raised from the people would by humility (*khushū'*).'[111] Ibn Mas'ūd said, 'There are people who recite the Qur'ān yet it does not descend beyond their throats; were it to reach the heart and take root therein, it is then that it would benefit.'[112]

al-Ḥasan said, 'Knowledge is of two types: knowledge that is superficial utterance upon the tongue, that is Allāh's proof against the children of Ādam; and knowledge that takes root in the heart and that is beneficial knowledge.'[113] The Salaf used to say, 'The scholars are of three categories: the scholar who knows Allāh and His commands; the scholar who knows Allāh but not His commands; and the scholar who knows His commands but does not know Allāh. The best and most complete of them is the first - he is the one who truly fears Allāh and knows His rulings.'[114]

The fundamental matter here is that the servant uses knowl-

[111] Aḥmad #23990 from Shaddād bin Aws and it was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by ibn Ḥibbān #4572 and Ḥākim #337 with Dhahabī agreeing; Tirmidhī #2653 on the authority of 'Ubādah ibn al-Ṣāmit and he said it was ḥasan gharīb and it was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākim #338 with Dhahabī agreeing; and Ḥākim #8448 on the authority of Hudhayfah and he said it was ṣaḥīḥ.

[112] Muslim #822

[113] Dārimī #376 and ibn Abī Shaybah, vol. 13, p. 235 and it is ṣaḥīḥ.

[114] Dārimī #375 and ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #1543 on the authority of Sufyān ibn 'Uyaynah and the isnād is ṣaḥīḥ.

edge to engender a gnosis of his Lord. When this comes to fruition he will find Him close. When this happens, He will bring him close and answer his supplications. It is mentioned in a Judeo-Christian narration, 'Son of Adam! Seek me and you will find Me, when you find Me you will find everything. However if you don't find Me, you will have lost everything. I am more beloved to you than anything else.'

Dhū'l-Nūn used to repeat these verses by night,

Seek for yourselves
The likes of what I have found.
I have found a place of rest wherein
He never falters in His love:
If I move away, He draws me close
And if I move closer, He draws nigh.[115]

2.11 The Foundation of Knowledge

Imām Aḥmad, may Allāh have mercy upon him, used to say about Ma'rūf, 'He possesses the foundation of knowledge: the fear of Allāh.' Therefore the foundation of knowledge is that knowledge which leads to fearing Him, loving Him, drawing close to Him, taking comfort with Him, and ardently desiring Him. Then this is followed by knowledge of the rulings of Allāh, all that He loves and is pleased with from the servant of statement, action, spiritual condition, and belief. Whoever realises these two types of knowledge has found beneficial knowledge; he has attained beneficial knowledge, a fearful heart, a content soul, and a supplication that is responded to.

[115] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 9, p. 357 #14112.

Whoever does not attain this knowledge will fall into the four matters that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, sought refuge from and his knowledge will actually become a source of misery for him and a proof against him. He will not benefit by it because it did not make his heart fearful of his Lord, it did not satisfy the desires of the soul for this world, rather it only strengthened it, his supplication went unheard because he did not obey the commands of his Lord and avoid all that He detests and angers Him. This provided that his knowledge is that knowledge from which benefit can be hoped, i.e. that knowledge derived from the Book and Sunnah. Whatever knowledge may be derived from other than these two sources is not beneficial and there is no hope of deriving benefit through it, indeed its harm is greater than its benefit!

2.12 The Signs of Beneficial and non-Beneficial Knowledge

The sign of knowledge that does not benefit is pride, arrogance, and conceit. Such a person seeks high position and ranking in this world and competes for it. He debates with the scholars with the aim of defeating them, and argues with the foolish with the aim of directing their attention towards him. It is reported from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, that whoever seeks knowledge for this purpose, "for him is the Fire, the Fire!"[116]

[116] Ibn Mājah #254 and ibn Ḥibbān #290 on the authority of Jābir. Būṣayrī, *al-Zawā'id* said, 'Its narrators are trustworthy and precise.' It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by 'Irāqi, vol. 1, p. 52; and likewise Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #7370.

It is possible that some who possess this type of knowledge claim to have gnosis of Allāh and that they only desire Him and nothing else. Their purpose behind this claim is naught but the desire for precedence in the hearts of people such as kings and others, that people think well of them, and that they enjoy a large, dedicated following.

The sign of this is that they will openly make the claim of *wilāyah* just as was the habit of the People of the Book, and later, the practice of the Qarāmiṭa, the Bāṭiniyyah and those like them.[117] This is the exact opposite of the state of the Salaf who used to think little of themselves, both inwardly and outwardly. 'Umar said, 'Whoever says, "I am a scholar" is an ignoramus, whoever says, "I am a believer" is a disbeliever and whoever says, "I am in Paradise" is in Hellfire.'

A further sign of this is that such a person will not accept the truth or submit to it. He will act arrogantly towards those who speak the truth, especially if they are seen to be of a lesser stature than him in the eyes of the people. This person will persist upon his falsehood simply out of fear that the hearts of people may become averse to him by his accepting the truth and therefore changing his stance. Perhaps such people may even outwardly censure themselves and show that they think little of themselves in front of an audience so that people believe that they are humble and thereby praise them. This is from the more subtle forms of showing off (*riyā'*) as pointed out by the Successors and those scholars who came after them. These people will openly accept praise and encourage it in a way that negates truthfulness (*ṣidq*) and sincerity (*ikhlāṣ*). The truthful person will always fear falling

[117] Refer to ibn al-Jawzī, *Muntaẓam*, vol. 5, p. 110; and Baghdādī, *al-Farq bayna al-Firaq*, p. 281.

prey to hypocrisy and meeting an evil end. The truthful person is always trying to avoid praise and always trying to avoid willing acceptance of it if it comes to him.

This is why a sign of the People of Knowledge is that they do not think themselves to be of any great stature or station, they detest in their very hearts praise and commendation and they do not act arrogantly towards anyone. al-Ḥasan said, 'The Legal Jurist is one who is abstemious of this world and desirous of the Hereafter, he has perspicuous insight into his religion, and is continuous in the worship of his Lord,' in another narration, 'One who does not envy those above him, or mock those beneath him, and does not take wages for knowledge that Allāh has taught him.'[118] The meaning of this last statement has also been reported to us from ibn 'Umar.[119]

Each time the People of this beneficial knowledge increase in knowledge, they increase in humility before Allāh, fear of Him, and submission to Him. Some of the Salaf said, 'It is desirable that the scholar sprinkle dust on his head out of humility before his Lord.'[120] Each time he increases in knowledge and cognisance of his Lord, he increases in fear and love of Him, as well as humility and submission.

From the signs of beneficial knowledge is that it will teach one

[118] Aḥmad, *al-Zuhd*, p. 268, with a ḥasan isnād.

[119] Dārimī #298 and ibn 'Abdu'l-Barr #858 and its isnād is ḍa'īf. A report of similar import is also recorded by Dārimī #300 on the authority of Abū Ḥāzim with a ḍa'īf isnād.

[120] Khaṭīb, *al-Faqīh wa'l-Mutafaqqih*, vol. 2, p. 230 #899 on the authority of Ayyūb with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād.

to flee from the worldly effects, the greatest of which is the desire for leadership, fame, and praise. It will teach one to avoid these and to expend effort in staying away from them. If any of this does occur, without his choice or desire, he is in a state of extreme fear of his end because it could just be a divine plan and a means of gradually leading him to perdition (*istidrāj*). It was because of this that Imām Aḥmad used to be in a state of fear when he became famous.

From the signs of beneficial knowledge is that one does not lay claim to having knowledge or become boastful of it. He does not accuse others of ignorance unless they oppose the Sunnah and its people, in which case he speaks against him out of anger for the sake of Allāh, not out of personal anger or the desire of gaining ascendancy over him.

As for he whose knowledge is not beneficial, he has no concern but to show his supremacy over the rest of the people by means of his knowledge, to accuse them of ignorance, and to demean them. This is from the meanest of traits to be found in people! It is possible that this person even accuse the scholars who came before him of ignorance and negligence; such a person loves his self and desires to promote it, he has a good opinion of himself and a bad opinion of those who came before him.

The People of beneficial knowledge are the exact opposite; they have a bad opinion of themselves and have a good opinion of the scholars of the past. Their hearts accept the nobility and excellence of their predecessors and their inability to come close to their ranks, let alone actually reach them! Excellent indeed is the saying of Abū Ḥanīfah when he was asked as to which of the two was better, 'Alqamah or al-Aswad, 'By Allāh we are not even

deserving of mentioning them let alone determining which of them is better!'

When the manners of the Salaf were mentioned to him, ibn al-Mubārak would say the following lines of poetry,

Do not mention us in the same context as them
The healthy, when walking, are not like the decrepit.

Whoever's knowledge is not beneficial and deems himself better than those who preceded him in his stances and his elaborate, laborious speech, will also deem himself better than them in knowledge or ranking in the Sight of Allāh. He will look down upon those who came before him and mock them for having little knowledge. This pauper does not realize that the lack of speech arising from the Salaf was because of their *wara'* and fear of Allāh, had they wished to lengthen or detail their discussions, they were fully capable of doing so. When ibn 'Abbās heard some people debating about the religion he said, 'Do you not know that to Allāh belong certain servants, though they are fully able to respond and are not dumb, the fear of Allāh has silenced them and given them tranquillity. They are the true scholars, the eloquent ones, the intelligent, the noble; scholars of the Days of Allāh, except that when they brought to mind the greatness of Allāh, their minds were overcome, their hearts split for the fear of Allāh, and their tongues were silenced. When they recovered from this state they rushed to performing righteous deeds thinking themselves to be amongst those who were negligent when in reality they were the sagacious, those of strong determination; thinking themselves to be oppressors and sinners when in reality they were pious worshippers, free of oppression and sin. They did not think that abundant worship was too much for Him; they

were not content with little worship, and they did not look down on any actions of worship. Wherever you were to meet them you would find them sombre, solicitous, in a state of dread and fear of their Lord.' Reported by Abū Nu'aym and others.[121]

Imām Aḥmad and Tirmidhī record the ḥadith of Abū Umāmah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Modesty and cautiously withholding the tongue (*al-'ayy*) are two branches of faith. Lewdness and eloquent speech are two branches of hypocrisy." It was declared ḥasan by Tirmidhī and also recorded by Ḥākim who declared it ṣaḥīḥ.[122]

Ibn Ḥibbān records the ḥadīth of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "Clear speech is from Allāh and *al-'ayy* is from Satan. Clear speech does not come about by a great deal of speech, rather it comes about by decisively stating the truth. *al-'Ayy* does not mean little speech but it means to make a mockery of the truth." [123]

Amongst the mursal reports of Muḥammad ibn Ka'b al-Quraẓī from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, is that he said, "There are three matters which would cause the servant loss in this world, but he will find that which is greater than them

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[121] Abu Nu'aym, vol. 1, p. 400 #1149; and ibn al-Mubārak, *al-Zuhd* #1495.

[122] Tirmidhī #2027 and Aḥmad #22312.
Tirmidhī ruled the ḥadīth to be ḥasan as did 'Irāqī, *al-Amālī*. It was ruled ṣaḥīḥ by Ḥākim #17 with Dhahabī agreeing, Suyūṭi #3866, and Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Jāmi'* #3201.

[123] Ibn Ḥibbān #5796 and its isnād contains 'Utbah ibn al-Sakan who is matrūk.
It is also recorded by Daylamī #5215 and Munāwī, vol. 5, p. 356, mentioned that its isnād contained weak narrators.

in return in the Hereafter: joining the ties of kinship, modesty, and withholding the tongue."

'Awn ibn 'Abdullāh said, 'Three matters are from faith: modesty, chastity, and withholding; withholding the tongue, not withholding the heart or actions. These are things which cause gain in the Hereafter and loss in this life but what is gained in the Hereafter is greater than what is lost in this world.'[124] This has also been reported from the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, but is weak.[125]

Some of the Salaf said, 'Perhaps a man sits with some people and they think that he is unable to speak when in reality he is fully capable of speech, but he is a Muslim scholar.' Therefore he who knows the worth of the Salaf will know that their silence over certain matters such as excessive speech, argumentation and debating, and increasing upon explanation beyond what is necessary did not arise out of the inability to speak, nor ignorance, nor due to shortcoming; instead it arose due to their scrupulousness, their fear of Allāh, and their preoccupying themselves with those affairs which would be of benefit rather than those affairs that contain no benefit.

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[124] 'Abdu'l-Razzāq, vol. 11, p. 142, with a ṣaḥīḥ isnād and Suyūṭī #3474 declared it ḥasan.

[125] Refer to Munāwī, vol. 3, p. 407.

A similar ḥadīth has been recorded by Dārimī #526 with the words, "Modesty, chastity, and withholding - withholding the tongue not the heart - and *fiqh* are from faith. These are things which cause gain in the Hereafter and loss in this life but what is gained in the Hereafter is greater," the isnād is ṣaḥīḥ.

Haythamī, vol. 8, p. 26, mentions another similar ḥadīth on the authority of Qurrah ibn Iyās and states that its isnād contains a weak narrator.

2.13 All Goodness lies in Traversing the Way of the *Salaf*

Regardless of whether it be in the foundation of the religion or its subsidiary issues, the exegesis of the Qur'ān, the explanation of ḥadīth, asceticism, matters which soften the heart, points of benefit and wisdom, exhortations - whatever the Salaf spoke about - whoever traverses their path in this is rightly guided, and whoever does not; instead involving himself in excessive questioning, disputation, and speculation; is not rightly guided. However, if this latter person was to admit their excellence and his own shortcoming then his state is better. Iyās ibn Mu'āwiyah said, 'Only a fool is unaware of the defects of his own soul.' It was asked of him, 'What is your defect?' He replied, 'Speaking too much.'[126] However, if this latter person was to attribute excellence to himself and deficiency and ignorance to those who preceded him, then he has clearly deviated and has suffered a great loss.

In summary, in these corrupt times, it is upon the person to either be content that he is a scholar in the sight of Allāh, or not be content with this and instead content himself with being a scholar in the eyes of people. If he chooses the first, let him suffice with Allāh's knowledge of him; whoever has a state of gnosis existing between him and Allāh will suffice with Allāh's knowledge of him. Whoever chooses the second then he falls under the saying of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, "Whoever seeks knowledge to compete with the scholars, or to argue with the fools, or to win the attention of people, let

[126] Abū Nu'aym, vol. 3, p. 146 #3489.

him take his place in the Fire."[127]

Wuhayb ibn al-Ward said, 'It could well be that a scholar in the eyes of the people is counted to be amongst the ignorant in the Sight of Allāh.'

Muslim records the ḥadith of Abū Hurayrah that the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, said, "The first to be burnt in the Fire are three...," amongst whom are the scholar and the reciter of the Qur'ān who only learnt their knowledge that it may be said of them, 'He is a scholar', 'He is a reciter of the Qur'ān.' It was indeed said of them and they will be dragged face first into Hell-fire.[128]

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[127] The author, may Allāh have mercy upon him, has actually combined two separate aḥādīth in one. The first is the ḥadīth, "Whoever acquires knowledge to compete with the scholars, or to argue with the fools, or to win the attention of people, is in the Fire." Recorded by Tirmidhī #2654 and Ibn Mājah #253 on the authority of ibn 'Umar.

It was declared ṣaḥīḥ by Albānī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Targhīb* #109.

The second is the ḥadīth, "Whoever seeks knowledge for other than Allāh - or, intending thereby other than Allāh - let him take his place in the Fire." Recorded by Tirmidhī #2655 and Ibn Mājah #258 on the authority of ibn 'Umar.

It was declared ḍa'īf by Albānī, *Ḍa'īf al-Jāmi'* #5687.

Refer also to fn. 98.

[128] Muslim #1905/4923 on the authority of Abū Hurayrah with the words, 'The first man (whose case) will be decided on the Day of Judgment, will be a man who died as a martyr. He shall be brought forth and Allāh will recount His blessings (which He had bestowed upon him) and he will acknowledge them. Then Allāh will ask, "What did you do with them?" He will reply, "I fought for Your sake until I died as a martyr." Allāh will say, "You lie. You fought so that you might be called a 'brave warrior' and you were called so." Then a command will be given and he will be dragged on his face and cast into Hell.

And a man who acquired knowledge and taught it and recited the Qur'ān. He ⇒

If one does not content his soul with this, contenting it instead with the position of judge simply because this is a position that people respect, then he has chosen that which is lesser in exchange for that which is best, and he has moved from the ranking of scholar to the ranking of oppressor. This is why, when one of the Salaf was offered the position of judge, he refused saying, 'I only learnt knowledge that I may be resurrected with the Prophets, not that I may be resurrected with kings. The scholars are resurrected with the Prophets and judges are resurrected with kings!'

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will be brought forth and Allāh will recount His blessings (which He had bestowed upon him) and he will acknowledge them. Then Allāh will ask, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "I acquired knowledge and disseminated it and recited the Qur'ān for your sake." Allāh will say, "You lie. You acquired knowledge so that you might be called 'a scholar,' and you recited the Qur'ān so that it might be said, 'He is a Qāri',' and it was said. Then a command will be given and he will be dragged on his faceand cast into Hell.

And a man whom Allāh had made abundantly rich and had granted every kind of wealth. He will be brought forth and Allāh will recount His blessings (which He had bestowed upon him) and he will acknowledge them. Then Allāh will ask, "What did you do with them?" He will say, "I spent money in every cause in which You wished that it should be spent for Your sake." Allāh will say, "You lie. You did so that it might be said, "He is generous," and it was said. Then a command will be given and he will be dragged on his face and cast into Hell.'

2.14 Bear this Life with Patience!

It is necessary that the believer have patience for a short while such that through it he will attain everlasting bliss. If he despairs and becomes impatient, he is as ibn al-Mubārak said, 'Whoever has patience, how short a time does he have to be patient for. Whoever despairs, how a short time does he have to enjoy himself!'

Imām Shāfi'ī used to say the following lines of poetry,

O my soul, it is only a few days, bear them patiently.
A lifetime seems but a flitting reverie.
O my soul, through this world pass swiftly
And leave it for true life ahead does lie![129]

We ask Allāh for beneficial knowledge and we take refuge with Him from knowledge that does not benefit, from a heart that does not fear Him, from a soul that is not content, and from a supplication that is not answered. O Allāh we take refuge with You from these four!

All praise and thanks are due to Allāh, the Lord of the worlds. May Allāh bestow his peace and blessings upon our master, Muḥammad, upon all of his family and all of his Companions.[130]

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[129] Shāfi'ī, *Dīwān*, p. 123.

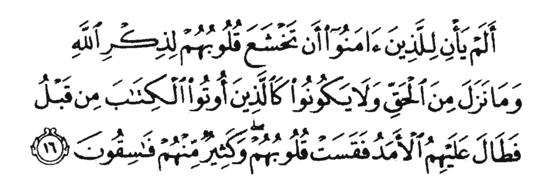
[130] Ājurrī, *al-Sharī'ah*, vol. 1, p. 451, said, 'Whoever possesses knowledge and intelligence and understands all that has preceded in this book will know that he is in need of performing righteous deeds. If Allāh wishes good for him, that person will adhere firmly to the Sunnah of the Prophet, peace and blessing be upon him, that which the Companions were upon, may Allāh be pleased with

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CHAPTER THREE

3.1 The People of the Book and their Hard Hearts

Consider carefully Allāh's censure of the People of the Book, the hardness of their hearts even after being given the Book and their witnessing miracle after miracle such as the revival of the dead man after being struck with a part of the cow.[131] We have been prohibited from resembling them and it has been said to us,



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them all, and the way of those who followed them in good: the Imāms of each generation. He will learn knowledge so as to remove ignorance from himself, his intention being to learn it for the sake of Allāh, Exalted is He, Alone. His intention is not to be for the sake of excelling in argumentation, disputation, and debate; and neither is to be for a worldly purpose. Whoever's intention is pure will be safe from desires, innovation, and misguidance, if Allāh wills, and will follow that which the Imāms of the Muslims were upon before him.'

[131] *al-Baqarah* (2): 72-74

Has the time not arrived for the hearts of those who have faith to yield to the remembrance of Allāh and to the truth He has revealed, so they are not like those who were given the Book before for whom the time seemed over long so that their hearts became hard?[132]

In another place Allāh explained to us the cause of their hard hearts saying,

فَبِمَا نَقْضِهِم مِّيثَٰقَهُمْ لَعَنَّٰهُمْ وَجَعَلْنَا قُلُوبَهُمْ قَٰسِيَةً

But because of their breaking of their covenant, We have cursed them and made their hearts hard.[133]

Thereby informing us that the hardness of their hearts arose as a punishment for their breaking the covenant of Allāh. This by opposing His commands and doing what He prohibited after they had accepted the contract, then Allāh says,

يُحَرِّفُونَ ٱلْكَلِمَ عَن مَّوَاضِعِهِۦ وَنَسُوا۟ حَظًّا مِّمَّا ذُكِّرُوا۟ بِهِۦ

They distort the true meaning of words and have forgotten a good portion of what they were reminded of.

[132] *al-Ḥadīd* (57): 16

[133] *al-Mā'idah* (5): 13

Allāh mentions that the hardness of their hearts led to two blameworthy characteristics,

1. Distorting the true meanings of words.

2. Their forgetting a portion of what they were admonished with, meaning by this: their abandoning and ignoring a portion of the wisdom and goodly exhortation given them. They forgot it, left acting upon it, and ignored it.

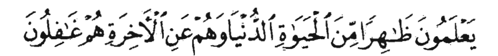
These two matters are to be found amongst our scholars who have been corrupted due to their having the traits of the People of the Book. They distort the true meanings of words because they are not sincere in their learning of knowledge and hence their hearts become hard. Therefore they do not preoccupy themselves with deeds but rather with distortion of words. They twist the words of the Book and Sunnah away from their correct meanings and import, doing so craftily and by the employment of subtle methods; methods such as claiming that they are metaphorical, thereby giving them far-fetched meanings, and casting doubts on the wordings of the Sunnah when they are unable to do so with regards the Book. They censure those who adhere firmly to the divine texts, accepting their clear meanings, and call them ignorant or Ḥashwī.[134] This trait is to be found amongst the Speculative Theologians, the Legal Jurists amongst the People of Opinion, and the Ṣūfīs from amongst the philosophers and Speculative Theologians.

They also leave aside a portion of the beneficial knowledge they have been admonished with, hence their hearts do not accept admonition and exhortation, instead they censure those who

[134] Refer to ibn Qutaybah, *Ta'wīl Mukhtalif al-Ḥadīth*, p. 55.

learn that which makes them weep and softens their hearts, branding them story-tellers!

In their works, the People of Opinion state, quoting their teachers, that the fruits of knowledge indicate the nobility of that knowledge. So the fruit of whoever preoccupies himself with exegesis of the Qur'ān is to narrate stories and admonish people, and the fruit of whoever preoccupies himself with their opinions and their knowledge is that he is able to give legal verdicts, pass judgments, and teach! Such people come under the meaning of the verse,



They know the outward aspect of the life of this world but are heedless of the Hereafter.[135]

It is their intense love for this world and position that has made them like this. If only they would lessen their desire for this world and instead direct it to the Hereafter, if only they were sincere to themselves and the servants of Allāh, they would then strictly follow what Allāh has revealed to His Messenger and they would enjoin the people to this as well. As a result most people would not violate the dictates of *taqwā*, and the texts of the Book and Sunnah would suffice them, with only a few of them not being satisfied with them. These few, Allāh would cause to return to the truth by way of those who had correctly understood the divine texts, and hence people would be left in no need of these concocted, false, subsidiary rulings and crafty tricks through which the doors to usury and other proscriptions have been opened. Today we see the proscribed being prescribed by way of

[135] *al-Rūm* (30): 7

the simplest of tricks and twists, just as the People of the Book used to do!

May Allāh guide those who believe to the truth in those matters in which they have differed *"and Allāh guides whoever He wills to the Straight Path."*[136]

May Allāh send abundant blessing of peace upon our master, Muḥammad, upon his family and his Companions until the Day of Judgment.

"Allāh suffices for us and an excellent disposer of our affairs is He."[137]

[136] *al-Baqarah* (2): 213

[137] *Āli 'Imrān* (3): 173

الورقة الأخيرة من نسخة (ش)

وهو الأهم نصيب من الذين يعلمون ظاهراً من الحياة الدنيا وهم
من الآخرة هم غافلون وعلى الحامل لهم على هذا شدة محبتهم
للدنيا وعلوها ولو انهم زهدوا في الدنيا ورغبوا في الآخرة
ونصحوا انفسهم وعباد الله لتمسكوا بما انزل الله على
رسوله والزموا الناس بذلك وكان الناس حينئذ لكثرة
لا يخرجون عن التقوى ويكون يكفيهم ما في نصوص الكتاب
والسنة ومن خرج منهم عنها كان قليلا وكان ما ينقض
من بعضهم من معاني النصوص ما يرد به الخارج عنها الى
الرجوع الى الصواب بذلك عما لديه من الفروع
الباطلة والحيل المحرمة التي تفتح ابواب الربا وغيره
من المحرمات واستحلت محارم الله بادنى الحيل كما فعل
اهل الكتاب وهدى الله الذين امنوا لما اختلفوا فيه من الحق
باذنه والله يهدي من يشاء الى صراط مستقيم وصلى الله على
سيدنا محمد وآله وصحبه وسلم تسليما كثيرا الى يوم الدين
وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل

يلوح الخط في القرطاس دهرا وكاتبه رميم في التراب
خرجت من التراب بغير ذنب وعدت مع الذنوب الى التراب
حشرنا الله في زمرة اوليائه في دار
كرامته بمنه وكرمه آمين

الوجه الأول من الورقة الأولى من نسخة (ش)

صورة الصفحة الأولى من نسخة (ف)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم رب أعن يا كريم

الحمد لله رب العالمين وصلى الله على محمد وآله وصحبه

وسلم تسليما كثيرا ... هذه كلمات مختصرة في

معنى العلم وانقسامه إلى علم نافع وعلم غير نافع والتنبيه

على فضل علم السلف على علم الخلف فنقول وبالله التوفيق

ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله قد ذكر الله في كتابه العلم

تارة في مقام المدح وهو العلم النافع وذكر العلم

تارة في مقام الذم وهو العلم الذي لا ينفع فأما الأول

فمثل قوله تعالى قل هل يستوي الذين يعلمون والذين

لا يعلمون وقوله شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو والملائكة

وأولوا العلم قائما بالقسط وقوله وقل رب زدني

علما وقوله إنما يخشى الله من عباده العلماء وما قص

سبحانه من قصة آدم وتعليمه الأسماء وعرضهم على الملائكة

وقولهم سبحانك لا علم لنا إلا ما علمتنا إنك أنت العليم

الحكيم وما قص سبحانه من قصة موسى عليه السلام

وقوله للخضر هل أتبعك على أن تعلمن مما علمت رشدا

فهذا هو العلم النافع وقد أخبر عن قوم أنهم أوتوا

علما ولم ينفعهم علمهم فهذا علم نافع في نفسه لكن صاحبه

لم ينتفع به قال تعالى مثل الذين حملوا التوراة ثم لم

يحملوها

صورة الصفحة الأولى من نسخة (ض)

صورة الصفحة الأخيرة من نسخة (ض)

[illegible] الكتاب [illegible]
[illegible] من [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible] أرباب الربا [illegible]
من الريبات واشتبهت [illegible] باذن الحق كما فعله [illegible]
وهدى الله الذين آمنوا لما اختلفوا فيه من الحق باذنه والله يهدي
من يشاء الى صراط مستقيم وصلى الله على نبينا محمد وآله وصحبه
وحسبنا الله ونعم الوكيل. تم بحمد الله وحسن توفيقه كتاب معرفة
العلم النافع وغير النافع ويليه ان شاء الله كتاب نور الاقتباس في
مشكاة وصية النبي صلى الله عليه وسلم لابن عباس وذلك في يوم
اثني عشرين من رجب [illegible] في [illegible] من [illegible]
[illegible] ابراهيم بن [illegible] كتبه لنفسه علمه مولاه ما ينفعه
ونفعه بما علمه فهو المعطي والمانع والموفق والهادي لا خير الا خيره
كما انه لا معبود بحق غيره
اللهم صل على محمد وآله وصحبه وسلم تسليما كثيرا

كتاب نور الاقتباس في مشكاة وصية
صلى الله عليه وسلم لابن عباس تصنيف الشيخ الإمام العالم الحافظ
زين الدين ابي الفرج عبد الرحمن ابن الشيخ [illegible] شهاب
الدين احمد بن رجب الحنبلي تغمده الله برحمته آمين
بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وبه نستعين
الحمد لله رب العالمين حمدا كثيرا طيبا مباركا فيه كما يحب ربنا ويرضى
وكما ينبغي لكرم وجهه وعز جلاله وصلى الله على محمد النبي الأمي
وعلى آله وصحبه وسلم تسليما كثيرا خرج الامام احمد من حديث حنش
الصنعاني

صورة الصفحة الأولى من نسخة (ع)

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم وبه نستعين

الحمد لله رب العالمين وصلى الله على محمد وآله وصحبه أجمعين وسلم تسليما كثيرا أما بعد
فهذه كلمات مختصرات في معنى العلم وانقسامه إلى علم نافع وعلم غير نافع والتنبيه
على فضل علم السلف على علم الخلف فنقول وبالله التوفيق ولا حول ولا قوة إلا بالله قد
ذكر الله في كتابه العلم تارة في مقام المدح وهو العلم النافع وذكر العلم تارة في
مقام الذم وهو العلم الذي لا ينفع. فأما الأول فمثل قوله تعالى قل هل يستوي الذين
يعلمون والذين لا يعلمون، وقوله شهد الله أنه لا إله إلا هو والملائكة وأولو العلم
قائما بالقسط، وقوله رب زدني علما وقوله إنما يخشى الله من عباده العلماء، وما
قص الله من قصة آدم عليه السلام وتعليمه الأسماء وعرضهم على الملائكة وقولهم
سبحانك لا علم لنا إلا ما علمتنا إنك أنت العليم الحكيم، وما قص سبحانه من قصة
موسى عليه السلام وقوله للخضر هل أتبعك على أن تعلمني مما علمت رشدا فهذا هو العلم
النافع وقد أخبر عن قوم أنهم أوتوا علما ولم ينفعهم فهذا علم نافع في نفسه لكن
صاحبه لم ينتفع به قال الله تعالى مثل الذين حملوا التوراة ثم لم يحملوها كمثل الحمار يحمل
أسفارا وقال الله تعالى واتل عليهم نبأ الذي آتيناه آياتنا فانسلخ منها فأتبعه الشيطان
فكان من الغاوين ولو شئنا لرفعناه بها ولكنه أخلد إلى الأرض واتبع هواه وقال
ثم خلف من بعدهم خلف ورثوا الكتاب يأخذون عرض هذا الأدنى الآية و
قال الله تعالى وأضله الله على علم، وأما العلم الذي ذكره الله على جهة الذم فقوله في السحر
ولقد علموا لمن اشتراه ما له في الآخرة من خلاق وقوله فلما جاءتهم رسلهم بالبينات
فرحوا بما عندهم من العلم وحاق بهم ما كانوا به يستهزئون، وقال يعلمون ظاهرا
من

صورة الصفحة الأخيرة من نسخة (ع)

أحدهما تحريف الكلم عن مواضعه والثاني نسيانهم حظا مما ذكروا به والمراد تركهم وإهمالهم
نصيبا مما ذكروا به من الحكمة والموعظة الحسنة فنسوا ذلك وتركوا العمل به وأهملوه
وهذان الأمران يوجدان في الذين فسدوا من علماء المسلمين لمشابهتهم أهل الكتاب
أحدهما تحريف الكلم فإن من لا ينتفع بعلمه لغير العمل به يقسو قلبه فلا يشتغل بالعمل بل بتحريف
الكلم وصرف ألفاظ الكتاب والسنة عن مواضعها والتلطف في ذلك بأنواع
الحيل اللطيفة من حملها على مجازات اللغة المستبعدة ونحو ذلك والطعن في ألفاظ
الكتاب ويذمون من تمسك بالنصوص وأجراها على ما يفهم منها ويسمونه جاهلا
وحشويا وهذا يوجد في المتكلمين في أصول الديانات وفي فقهاء الرأي وفي متفلسفة
الفلاسفة والمتكلمين والثاني نسيان حظ مما ذكروا به من العلم النافع فلا تتعظ
قلوبهم بل يذمون من تعلم ما يبكيه ويرق به قلبه ويسمونه قاصا ويقول بعض أهل
الرأي في كتبهم عن بعض شيوخهم إن ثمرات العلوم تدل على شرفها فمن اشتغل بالتفسير
فغايته أن يقص على الناس ويذكرهم ومن اشتغل بعلمهم يفتي ويقضي ويحكم و
يدرس ويصدر، لهم نصيب من الذين يعلمون ظاهرا من الحياة الدنيا وهم عن الآخرة
هم غافلون والحامل لهم على هذا شدة محبتهم للدنيا وعلوها ولو أنهم زهدوا في
الدنيا ورغبوا في الآخرة ونصحوا أنفسهم وعباد الله لتمسكوا بما أنزل الله على رسوله
وألزموا الناس بذلك فكان الناس حينئذ ألزم وأبعد عن التقوى فكان
يكفيهم ما في نصوص الكتاب والسنة ومن خرج منهم عنها كان قليلا فكان الله
يقيض من يفهم معاني النصوص ما يرد به الخارج عنها إلى الرجوع إليها ويستغني
بذلك عما ولده من الفروع الباطلة والحيل المحرمة التي بسببها فتح أبواب الربا
وغيره من المحرمات واستحلت المحارم بأدنى الحيل كما فعل أهل الكتاب وهدى الله
الذين آمنوا لما اختلفوا فيه من الحق بإذنه والله يهدي من يشاء إلى صراط مستقيم

INDEX OF SECTS

Ahlu'l-Kalām: Adherents to speculative theology, people seeking to explain the articles and premises of belief and to give evidences for them based on philosophy and logic.

Bāṭiniyyah: A sect of the Shī'a, the followers of Ismā'īl ibn Ja'far. They were of the belief that the legal texts were merely superficial expressions carrying inner meanings that oppose what is outwardly understood of them, examples lie with their explanations of Paradise, Hell and the Last Day.

Ḥashwiyyah: A term frequently used by the innovators to refer to Ahlu'l-Sunnah, the Ahl'l-Ḥadith, those who affirmed the Attributes of Allāh. The first to use this term was 'Amr ibn 'Ubaid al-Mu'tazilī who said that 'Abdullāh ibn 'Umar ibn al-Khaṭṭāb was a Ḥashwī.

Jabariyyah: Followers of the school of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān in his belief that all actions are decreed by Allāh and man has no control over them at all, instead he is forced to do what he does.

Jahmiyyah: Followers of Jahm ibn Ṣafwān in his denial of the Names and Attributes of Allāh.

Karrāmiyyah: Followers of Muḥammad ibn Karrām (d. 255H), they divided into many sub-sects and were famous for their likening of Allāh to His creation (*tashbīh*).

Mutakallimūn: Speculative Theologians, adherents to *kalām*.

Mu'tazila: Followers of Wāṣil ibn 'Aṭā' al-Ghazzāl who abandoned the circles of Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. They negated the Attributes of Allāh for fear of likening Him to His creation, yet affirmed His Names. From amongst their beliefs was that a person who committed a major sin was neither a believer nor a disbeliever, rather of a station between the two stations, but he would be consigned to Hellfire forever. They were from the rank and file of the Mutakallimūn and gave precedence to their intellects over the divine texts.

Qadariyyah: Those who held the belief that man has complete free will in all that he does and that Allāh has no control over him.

Qarāmiṭa: A sect holding the same belief as the Bāṭiniyyah and followers of Maymūn ibn Daysān.

Falāsifa: Those philosophers who promoted the 'wisdom' of the Greeks, the Greek philosophers who did not believe in the Resurrection as it is mentioned in the Book and Sunnah, nor did they affirm the Names and Attributes of Allāh. From amongst their leaders was Aristotle, the student of Plato and from amongst their latter proponents was al-Fārābī and ibn Sīnā.

INDEX OF ARABIC WORDS

Awliyā': plural of *walī*; friend, ally, loyal companion. From the word *wilāyah* meaning loyalty and closeness, the opposite of enmity.

'Ayy: withholding the tongue from speaking, carefully considering each word before it is said.

Barzakh: barrier, isthmus, A barrier that is erected between the deceased and this life preventing him from returning and a generic reference to the life that commences after death.

Bayān: Speech, clarification, discourse. It is of two types: the first whereby the intended meaning is expressed clearly, whatever language it may be in, this category is not regarded as magic; the second whereby the intended meaning is expressed in eloquent, cleverly doctored phrases based upon specific rules such that one listening takes pleasure in hearing the words and they affect his very heart. This category is what has been likened to magic as it captivates and beguiles the heart and overcomes the soul to the point that the face of reality could be transformed to illusion and the one captivated perceive only that which the speaker wants him to perceive. This category can be used in a commendable fashion

and in a blameworthy fashion. As for the commendable form, it is to direct the person towards the truth and use these methods to aid the truth. As for the blameworthy form, it is to direct the person towards falsehood or envelop him in confusion such that the truth is seen as falsehood and falsehood as truth. This is completely blameworthy and has been likened to that which is completely blameworthy - magic

Bid'ah: innovation, that which is newly introduced into the religion of Allāh.

Ḍa'īf: weak; the ḥadīth that is neither ṣaḥīḥ nor ḥasan because it fails to meet one of their requirements. It is of varying degrees of severity, the most severe of which being mawḍū', fabricated.

Dhawq: taste, perceptivity, technically referring to spiritual experience, *dhawq* is a more temporary state of *wajd*. One may receive some forms of inspiration in the heart as a result of these states however this inspiration should always be compared to the Book and Sunnah to ascertain its correctness.

Dhikr: remembrance, recollection, technically referring the remembrance of Allāh.

Du'ā: supplication, invocation, it is an action of worship that may only be directed to Allāh. It is of two types, supplication through worship (*du'ā 'ibādah*) and supplication of request (*du'ā mas'alah*). The first type of *du'ā* can be understood when one understands that every act of worship is done with the unstated plea that Allāh accept that action of worship and the desire to draw closer to him; and hence attain His pleas-

ure. Hence every action of worship is a type of request to Allāh. The second type of *du'ā* is whereby one explicitly asks his Lord of something such as 'O Allāh! Grant me good in this world and the Hereafter.' The second type includes the first type and the first type necessitates the second type.

Ḥadīth: A text attributed to the Prophet (ﷺ) describing his actions, words, descriptions and tacit approvals. It consists of two portions, the body of the text (*matn*) and the *isnād*. Rarely the term is also used to refer to a text attributed to a Companion or a *Tābi'ī*.

Ḥāfiẓ: pl. *ḥuffāẓ*. Ḥadīth Master, commonly referred to one who has memorised at least 100,000 ḥadīths.

Ḥasan: good, fair. A ḥadīth whose *isnād* is continuously linked of just, morally upright narrators but whose precision (*ḍabṭ*) falls short of the requirements of the ṣaḥīḥ ḥadīth; containing no irregularity (*shādh*) and no hidden defect (*'illah*). A ḥadīth can be ḥasan in and of itself, or contain a defect but still be ruled to be so due to supporting evidences.

Ḥayā': modesty, derived from the word *ḥayāt*, or life because it is through modesty that the heart is granted life and it is through the absence of modesty that it dies. It is a state that arises through the servant being aware that Allāh is watching him, having love, fear and awe of Him and thinking little of himself. Al-Junayd said, '*al-Ḥayā'* is to recognise the bounties of Allāh and then to recognise ones own shortcomings. Through this a state is engendered which is termed *al-Ḥayā'*, the reality of which is that it is a mannerism that prevents one from committing vile actions and from being lax in fulfilling the

rights of Allāh.'

Ḥudūd: limits, boundaries. The limits ordained by Allāh, prescribed punishments.

Ḥulūl wa-l-Ittiḥād: incarnation and unification, the settling of a superior faculty upon a support.

Iḥsān: beneficence, excellence. To worship Allāh as if one is seeing Him, and knowing that even though one sees Him not, He sees the servant.

Ikhlāṣ: sincerity, to strip oneself of worshiping any besides Allāh such that everything one does is performed only to draw closer to Him and for His pleasure. It is to purify ones actions from any but the Creator having a share in them, from any defect or self-desire. The one who has true *ikhlāṣ* (*mukhliṣ*) will be free of *riyā'*.

'Ilm: knowledge.

Īmān: The firm belief, complete acknowledgement and acceptance of all that Allāh and His Messenger have commanded to have faith in, submitting to it both inwardly and outwardly. It is the acceptance and belief of the heart that includes the actions of the heart and body, therefore it encompasses the establishment of the whole religion. This is why the Imāms and Salaf used to say, 'Faith is the statement of the heart and tongue, action of the heart, tongue and limbs.' Hence it comprises statement, action and belief, it increases through obedience and decreases through disobedience. It includes the beliefs of faith, its morals and manners and the actions demanded by it.

Islām: submission, submitting to the will of Allāh through following His law as revealed upon the tongue of the Messenger (ﷺ).

Isnād: support. The chain of authorities on which a narration is based, linking the end narrator of a narration to the one it is attributed to, be it the Prophet (ﷺ) or anyone else, narrator by narrator.

Istidrāj: gradually leading to a desired conclusion. Technically refers to Allāh gradually leading one who displays ingratitude to His favours to his destruction as a befitting recompense. Some of the Salaf would say, 'When you see Allāh bestowing His blessings upon you, one after the other, and you are steadfast in disobeying Him, then beware for this is *istidrāj* by which He gradually leads you to destruction.'

Ittibā': following, technically referring to following the Sunnah of the Prophet (ﷺ).

'Iyāfah: the practice of divination through frightening birds, the sounds they make and the directions in which they fly.

Jāhiliyyah: Pre-Islāmic Ignorance. Technically this refers to the condition of a people before the guidance of Allāh reaches them, or the state of a people that prevents them from accepting the guidance of Allāh.

Jahl: ignorance.

Kalām: speech, discourse. Technically used to refer to dialectics and scholastic theology.

Kufr: denial, rejection, hiding, technically referring to disbelief. It can be major (removing a person from the fold of Islām) or minor (not removing a person from the fold of Islām).

Majhūl: unknown. A reference to a narrator from whom only one narrator narrates (*majhūl al-'ain*) or whose state of precision (*ḍabṭ*) is unknown (*majhūl al-ḥāl*), such a narrator makes the *isnād ḍa'īf.*

Ma'rifah: gnosis. Knowledge that is acted upon by the one who knows, the Gnostic of Allāh is one who has knowledge of Allāh, the path that leads to Allāh and the pitfalls of that path. He is one who knows Allāh, His Names, Attributes and Actions and then displays *ṣidq* and *ikhlāṣ* towards Allāh in all things. He works towards removing all despicable morals and mannerisms and has *ṣabr* in all of this.

Matrūk: abandoned. A narrator who is accused of lying, or makes many mistakes, or makes mistakes in aḥādith that are agreed upon, or narrates from famous narrators that which those narrators do not know.

Munqaṭi': that ḥadīth from which the narrator just before the Companion has been omitted from its *isnād.*

Murāqabah: self-inspection. The servant having the sure knowledge that Allāh sees him in all circumstances and knows all that he is doing, as such the he does his utmost not to fall into the prohibited matters and to correct his own failings.

Mursal: disconnected. A ḥadīth whereby a *Tābi'ī* narrates directly from the Prophet (ﷺ) without mentioning the Companion.

In the view of the majority of Scholars it is a sub-category of ḍaʿīf.

Muṣḥaf: text of the Qur'ān

Qadr: Divine Decree and Destiny.

Qur'ān: The actual Word of Allāh revealed to the Prophet (ﷺ) in the Arabic language through the medium of the Angel Gabriel and the greatest miracle bestowed him. It consists of 114 chapters commencing with al-Fātiḥah and ending with an-Nās.

Riyā': showing off, ostentation, an example of which lies in person beautifying actions of worship because he knows people are watching.

Ruqyā: recitation used to cure an illness or disease. It can only be done in the Arabic tongue, in words whose meaning is understood, using verses of the Qurʿān or supplications of the Prophet combined with the belief that it is only Allāh who in reality gives the cure.

Ṣāḥīḥ: correct, authentic. A ḥadith which has a continuously linked *isnād*, of just, morally upright and precise narrators; containing no irregularity (*shādh*) or hidden defect (*ʿillah*). Hence five conditions have to be met: the *isnād* being continuously linked; the justice (*ʿadl*) of the narrator; the precision (*ḍabṭ*) of the narrator; its not being *shādh*; and its not containing an *ʿillah*. The ḥadīth can be ṣaḥīḥ in and of itself, or it can contain a defect but still be ruled to be ṣaḥīḥ due to supporting evidences.

Salaf: predecessors. Technically used to refer to the best generations of Muslims, the first three generation: the *Ṣaḥābah*, the *Tābiʿūn* and the *Tabʿ Tābiʿūn* due to the ḥadīth, "The best of people are my generation, then the one that follows, then the one that follows."

Ṣidq: truthfulness, the conformity of the inner to the outer such that the deeds and statements of the person do not belie his beliefs and vice-versa. *Ṣidq* is the foundation of faith and results in peace of mind, lying is the foundation of hypocrisy and results in doubt and suspicion, and this is why the two can never co-exist without being at odds with each other. al-Junayd was asked as to whether *ṣidq* and *ikhlāṣ* were the same or different and he replied, 'They are different, *ṣidq* is the root and *ikhlāṣ* is the branch. *Ṣidq* is the foundation of everything and *ikhlāṣ* only comes into play once one commences an action. Actions are only acceptable when they combine both.' The one who has true *ṣidq* will be free of self-conceit.

Shādh: irregular, odd. A ḥadīth narrated by a trustworthy and precise narrator that contradicts the narrative of other narrators or the narration of one more trustworthy and precise than him, provided that a reconciliation is not possible.

Shirk: association, technically referring to directing a right that is due to Allāh Alone to another object of creation, either completely or partially. It can be major (removing a person from the fold of Islām) or minor (not removing a person from the fold of Islām).

Sunnah: way, path. The actions, words, descriptions, commands, prohibitions and tacit approvals of the Prophet (ﷺ).

Tābi'ūn: The generation following that of the Companions.

Tab' Tābi'ūn: The generation following that of the *Tābi'ūn.*

Tadlīs: deceit. An action of a narrator whereby he makes out that he heard something from a particular narrator what he did not hear or conceals the identity of the one he is narrating from. In order to do so, he will use terms that are vague such as 'such-and-such said' and 'on the authority of such-and-such.' The first type of *tadlīs* is blameworthy and constitutes a defect in the *isnād.* The second is dependant upon exactly what was done and the motives of the narrator, it can be blameworthy or not.

Taqwā: the basic meaning of which is setting a barrier between two things. This is why it is said that one *ittaqā* with his shield, i.e. he set it as a barrier between him and the one who wished him evil. Therefore it is as if the one who has taqwa (*muttaqī*) has used his following the commands of Allāh and avoiding His prohibitions as a barrier between himself and the Punishment. Hence he has preserved and fortified himself against the punishment of Allāh through his obeying Him.

Ṭarq: the practice of divination through drawing lines in the earth or equally the practice of throwing gravel onto the ground and divination by the shapes subsequently formed therein.

Tawḥīd: unification, monotheism, the belief in the absolute Oneness of Allāh. It is to believe that Allāh Alone is the creator, nourisher, and sustainer of the worlds; it is to believe that Allāh Alone deserves to be worshipped; and it is to believe that He has unique and perfect Names and Attributes that far

transcend anything that one can imagine.

Ṭiyarah: seeing bad omens in things.

Waḥdatu-l-Wujūd: The unity of existence, the heretical belief that Allāh is everywhere and everything.

Wajd: strong emotion, technically referring to spiritual ecstasy. The heart experiencing sudden surges of intense love, desire, awe and glorification of Allāh.

Wara': pious caution, scrupulousness. A mannerism through which the heart is purified of all that would sully it and has been excellently summarised in the saying of the Prophet (ﷺ), "From the excellence of ones Islām is his leaving that which does not concern him." It is to leave all that causes one doubt, all that does not concern him, to continuously bring oneself to account and to devote oneself to Allāh. Some of the Salaf said, 'None attains the reality of *taqwā* until he leaves that which is harmless for fear of falling into that which is harmful.'

Yaqīn: certainty. It is to faith (*Īmān*) what the soul is to the body, it is the soul to the actions of the heart which in turn formulate the souls to the actions of the limbs and through it one attains the rank of Ṣiddīq. From *yaqīn* does *tawakkul* (absolute reliance in Allāh) sprout and through *yaqīn* is all doubt, suspicion and worry dispelled and the heart filled with love, hope and fear of Allāh. *Yaqīn* is of three levels, that which arises from knowledge (*'ilm al-yaqīn*), seeing (*'ain al-yaqīn*) and actual experience (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*).